



PASSIONIST FATHERS
ST. PAUL, KANSAS

THE
PASSIONIST
CIRCLE







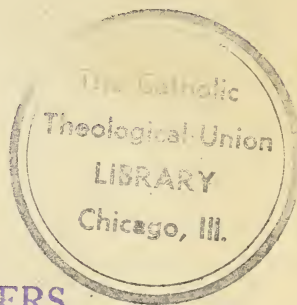
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

C 24B
m51
[986]

MEMOIRS
OF THE
FIRST COMPANIONS
OF
SAINT PAUL OF THE CROSS,

FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION
OF PASSIONISTS.

BY
A PRIEST OF THE SAME CONGREGATION.



PASSIONIST FATHERS
ST. PAUL, KANSAS

ST. MICHAEL'S MONASTERY PRESS
WEST HOBOKEN, N. J.

1913.



These *Memoirs*, translated from the Italian, are now printed in English for private circulation among Passionists.

It is to be understood that no evidence is claimed for the truth of the miracles, or for other supernatural manifestations, referred to in the following pages, beyond what the available historic evidence may warrant.

Imprimi potest.

STANISLAUS A SS. REDEMPTORE,

Præpositus Provincialis,

Prov. S. Pauli a Cruce, U. S. A.

Die 19 Martii 1914.

NIHIL OBSTAT.

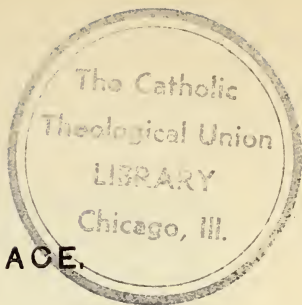
PAUL NUSSBAUM, C. P.
Censor.

May 1, 1913.

IMPRIMATUR.

† JOHN J. O'CONNOR, D. D.,
Bishop of Newark.

March 19, 1914.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

EACH RELIGIOUS ORDER in the Church has been raised up by the special providence of God to afford His chosen souls the most efficacious means to acquire evangelical perfection, and thus to adorn the Immaculate Bride of Christ with holy examples of virtue. So much appears from the history of the institutes which in the course of nineteen centuries have arisen in her midst. They have all the same end in view and the same essential form, though widely divergent in the means and methods used in the attainment of their common object. These particular methods, constituting as they do the spirit proper to each Order, must be well understood by those who wish to arrive at a true knowledge of any one of them. This, then, is our object in putting before the reader these unpublished notes relating to the lives of the first companions of St. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Congregation of the Passion: — to exhibit, in actual operation, the spirit which has animated the institute from its earliest beginnings.

Since it was God's will to establish in His Church the Passionist Congregation, He put it into the heart of St. Paul of the Cross, while he was still a youth, to lead a life of penance and at the same time to apply himself to secure the salvation of the souls of others: thereafter He inspired him to gather about him his first com-

panions, the earliest imitators of his way of life; and he, most faithful follower of the divine Will, obeyed its promptings by founding in the Church of God that Congregation of which Benedict XIV said, "that instead of being the latest of such Institutes to make its appearance, it should have been the very first."

This event took place midway in the 18th century, accompanied by facts which clearly demonstrated that the idea of the Institute came from God Himself. The founder's intention in establishing the Congregation was, as he himself repeatedly said, to bring together a number of men who, while sanctifying themselves by detachment from all created things in a life of rigorous poverty, and of constant prayer and fasting, should not spare themselves in the ministry of saving their neighbors' souls by means of a very special and intense devotion to the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ.

Those who came to him as his first companions were few in number, but each of them was singularly gifted; thus was manifested the Divine assistance in the foundation of this holy Institute. From the beginning, Paul of the Cross saw in them men of large and generous hearts, who giving themselves entirely to him, imitated him so perfectly and were so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that they became so many pillars of the new Congregation. These holy companions of Paul are one of the chief glories of our humble Institute; the first stones, after the founder, of this new spiritual building. It is much to be desired that there lives be known not only to their followers, but for the edification of the faithful in

general. For this reason it is to be regretted that many documents necessary for such a purpose are wanting, owing to the spirit of humility, modesty and mortification, and to the contempt of the world which our holy founder instilled into them, which made them anxious to become real saints, without caring whether or no they appeared such to others. And so it happened that they took little trouble about leaving behind them anything in the way of biographical notes. Nevertheless, some slight outlines of their lives were written in the early days of the Congregation. These, fortunately, have come down to us; and lest they should perish, it has been resolved to publish them. They are concerned with thirteen of the founder's companions, and we present them to the reader in their simplicity, in the belief that to adorn them with rhetorical flourishes would be almost to profane the austere lives of these holy penitents. Besides these thirteen servants of God there are others, with whom, however, we will not concern ourselves at any length in the present publication; such notes about them as have remained being of the briefest. Of them we will only say something in general, drawing, for this purpose, upon an authentic memorandum which has been fortunately preserved in our archives; which seems to us to throw so clear a light upon the beginnings of our Congregation and to put before us so plainly the spirit which animated these, its first members, that in any case it must have been regarded as a necessary introduction to the notes which are here given to the world.

"The exercise of mental prayer," so it is stated in this document, "was performed by these

Religious with such ardor, that it seemed to be almost their sole occupation. To this end they kept an inviolable silence, living as much as possible retired from the world, dividing their time between study and prayer. Even during the recreation hour, their talk was of God, or of the things that tend to God; indeed, it often happened that the Religious left the recreation room more inflamed with fervor than if they had been spending that time in Church or Choir. In the walk which is taken on festivals and on Thursdays, to avoid all danger of dissipation they never went where they might be liable to meet people, but always took the most deserted paths. The time assigned in the Rule to prayer was to them but little time, so that even during external employments they were absorbed in God, and when they sat at table they were so lost in the thought of God, that often the server was obliged to shake them, in order that they might take the food he handed them. Some of them forgot to drink; others, intent on the spiritual reading prescribed at meal times, shed silent and abundant tears of devotion; because the delight of their hearts exceeded that of their bodies. In some the spirit of devotion was so strong that even in sleep they dreamed of spiritual things. Out of the abundance of their hearts, their tongues discoursed of Him whom they so deeply loved. It is related that the benefactors of the Congregation were often amazed to find that our *questuanti*, (brothers sent to beg alms), although laymen, and scarcely able to read, spoke with such enlightenment on the subject of prayer as to demonstrate that they were perfect masters of it. This love of prayer

went further still, every care being taken that the seculars who served as domestics in the Retreat should learn this holy exercise, with the result that some of them became great servants of God, and died among us in the odor of sanctity."

With our first brothers holy prayer was the source of all good. Having united themselves to God with all the strength of their wills, their rule of life consisted in holy obedience. Indeed, they obeyed with such promptitude that their superiors were obliged to be very careful in commanding these fervent subjects, to whom prudence and blind obedience were one and the same thing. The signals for common observance were obeyed with the same readiness: everyone believed it his duty to leave the work which he had begun at the first sound of the bell, which called to some community duty. It would be impossible adequately to describe their respect for the holy Rule. Whatever question might arise as to anything which had been done, or had to be done, it was enough to say "it is prescribed by the Rule," and all discussion ceased.

So detached were they from the world and from themselves, that, when it was necessary to send anyone outside the house, or to order him to do anything to which he had a natural inclination, the superior was obliged almost to reprove them for their too great attachment to solitude, or for excess in mortification. Similarly, when any one was chosen to fill a position of responsibility, he would at once show signs of interior regret, and try to avoid it, because every one desired to obey rather than command. The way in which certain religious, who had been men of the world, became

humble and docile as children, was wonderful to behold, so complete was the simplicity with which they made themselves one with the rest. There existed among them a certain rivalry as to who should speak least; whose habit should be the most patched, and as to whom the meanest occupations should fall. So great was their detachment from created things that often, for want of anything else to bring, they would take the sermons they had prepared for their missions and carry them to the superior, for fear they might have some affection for what they had written. So poor was their cells, that they lacked even things lawful and necessary.

It is not easy to give an idea of their spirit of mortification of the senses. After the example of their holy founder, they scrupled to satisfy the most innocent curiosity. Under the windows of the Retreat at Terracina pigeon shooting matches took place at certain times; when the Founder would exhort the Religious to avoid curiosity and dissipation, and so perfect was their obedience that not only did they keep indoors, but steadfastly refused to listen to any reports as to the progress of the matches. Many, indeed, covered the windows of their cells, that they might entirely remove temptation to curiosity. They crucified their flesh to such a degree that our Retreats were commonly spoken of as true copies of the old monasteries of the Thebaid. So great was their fervor that they thought nothing of the daily fast, of rising for the midnight office, of going barefoot, or of the other austerities prescribed by the Rule; and in the end their superiors were obliged to restrain the ardor which impelled several of

them to practice extraordinary penance and mortification.

The holy life of our first Religious naturally aroused great admiration among seculars who, when they visited our Retreats, were struck with the angelic tranquillity of the brethren; their life of retirement and silence; the devotion with which they sang the divine office; the cleanliness and neatness with which the Church and all sacred objects were kept. Others who stayed in the Retreat for days at a time, were amazed at a silence so perfect that the house appeared to be without inhabitants. On one occasion a distinguished ecclesiastic of Pontecorvo, desiring to see the religious of whom he had heard so much, betook himself to the Retreat of S. Sosio. Having entered the house, he paced the corridors both up and down stairs without meeting or hearing any-one; concluding, at last, that all the Community were out of doors. He accordingly left the house and waited near the gate for their return. When afterwards he understood that they were all the time at home, either in their cells or employed in their special duties, he was so impressed that he became one of our benefactors. Padre Lancellotti, the famous Jesuit, received a similiar impression on the occasion of a visit he paid to our holy Founder at the Retreat of St. Angelo, near Vetralla. He had become acquainted some time previously with our holy Father and his brother, Father John Baptist, and had told them he did not approve of certain austerities which it was proposed to practice in the new Institute. But on his arrival at the Retreat of St. Angelo, he seemed to behold a miracle when he found the Congrega-

tion established and already beginning to spread with the spirit of austerity which the holy Founder had communicated to it. Over and over again did he exclaim: "What do I see? what do I see? Who would have thought it?"

Nor was the life of these early Passionists an object of admiration to outsiders alone. Their Founder himself had the same feeling about it. Once he wrote to a friend: "It is a wonder to behold how the Religious, especially the younger ones, apply themselves to acquire virtue in such a manner that if they were not restrained they would go too far." When he visited the Retreat of St. Angelo he was often moved to tears at the sight of the virtue and mortification of his religious children, and a secular who went to see him at the Retreat in Toscanella, noticed that one day the holy Father, when the students passed him as they went to take their walk, turned his head the other way lest the abundant tears of consolation which flowed from his eyes should betray the feeling of his heart.

But the greatest gift bestowed on these servants of God was that of perseverance until death in this holy state of fervor. Our holy Founder, shortly before he died, spoke of the consolation he had in the thought, that all the religious who, until that time had died in the Congregation, (and they were more than sixty) were safe and secure in heaven for all eternity. What he then said of those already dead, we have reason to believe of those other companions of his who survived him, persevering in the same manner of life. In the registers of their death, their passage to the other life is recorded with the most con-

soling expressions. Of a lay-brother we read that before his death he turned to a fellow religious and said: "I never believed that it was so sweet to die." Another, when asked if he died willingly, replied: "I must not think of death, because the very idea of it gives me too much pleasure." Of others it is said that even their delirium was a source of edification, because they either sang the praises of God, recited prayers or carried out imaginary orders of their superiors in the spirit of obedience. A cleric at the point of death amazed the Father Rector who had come to give him Extreme Unction, by the recollection with which he raised his arms and presented his hands devoutly and unassisted to receive the holy anointing. Another, a Subdeacon, was believed to have been visited in his last moments by our Blessed Lady; such was his holy impatience to die that he besought those about him to recite the final prayers — *Subvenite Sancti Dei*. A priest who had begged of Mary most holy the grace to die, saw an answer to his prayer in a severe sickness which came upon him. Before taking to his bed, he placed a picture of the Blessed Virgin in such a position that he could see it as he lay. And as death drew nigh, he looked at the image of Mary with a smile, expressing repeatedly his longing to go hence, until in a little while he passed from this life. It is said of another priest, who had foretold his approaching death, that when the terrible moment arrived he died with a joyful and smiling countenance.

What has been said gives us a general idea of the life led by our first Passionists. And here we may fitly notice a fact which may cause some

astonishment to those who read these pages; although it really ought not to do so, namely, that the notices of the various companions of St. Paul of the Cross which we now publish, so strongly resemble each other, that they might apply with equal force to any one of them. But a little reflection will suffice to convince us that it must be so in the very nature of things; because, as these servants of God, animated as they were by the same spirit and leading the same austere life, necessarily performed the same holy actions and practised the same virtues. For which reason they may be said to have been copies more or less perfect of their holy Founder, all resembling him, and therefore, differing little from one another.

As to the style in which these notes are written, there is little need to speak, precisely because, as the very title of this book betokens, they are simply *notes*; edifying indeed, but claiming to be nothing more than notes. If anyone should look among them for eloquent biographies with the pomp of accurate descriptions; of figures of speech and sweet images calculated merely to please the reader, he will be disappointed. The lives of austere Passionists could not be written in such a style, much less mere notes about them, resembling of their very nature chronicles rather than history. It is true that in this age, enervated by the constant pursual of romances and other pleasure-giving literature, few will care for such hard and rigorous reading; but there are still strong and generous souls whose taste is uncorrupted by the world. Besides, I find consolation in the thought that perhaps some strayed soul by reading these pages may be led to return to the

path of virtue. For the rest, my object in publishing this book has been to afford some spiritual help to my neighbor, and especially to my brethren in religion; and to swell the chorus of God's praises, Who at all times is wonderful in His saints. This is my desire, and if this end, at least in part, is secured, I shall find therein the full reward of my humble labors.





Fr. John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel

Brother of St. Paul of the Cross.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH AND YOUTHFUL FERVOR.

THE NOTES respecting Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel, brother of our holy Founder, may aptly begin this series of short biographies, notwithstanding the fact that his life has been already published by one of our Fathers; because this servant of God was always the inseparable companion of St. Paul of the Cross in his austere life, in the fatigues of the apostolate, and in his anxiety for the foundation of the Congregation, so that he may be rightly regarded, after the holy Founder himself, as the first stone of the new Institute.

The want of many documents which would have shed a stronger light upon his life is to be deplored, as in the case of other early Passionists; but, as has been already remarked in the introduction, these first religious brethren of St. Paul

of the Cross made no account of such matters; they were more anxious to be saints in very truth than to appear such, and in their hatred of self-esteem, they scrupulously avoided anything which might obtain for them the reputation of being the great servants of God they in reality were. We will, therefore, make the most of such notes about him as remain; and in truth they suffice to show us that he was a worthy brother of that Paul who could well claim to say with the Apostle: *Mihi vivere Christus est.*—To me to live is Christ; and again, *Vivo ego jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.*—I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

Father John Baptist was born in the year 1695, at Ovada, a considerable town in the Province of Liguria, now part of the diocese of Acqui, his fathers name being Luca Danei, a native of Castellazzo, and his mothers Anna Maria Massari, a native of Rivarolo, near Genoa. The house in which he was born, and in which his holy brother Paul of the Cross first saw the light in the preceding year, still exists in the Piazza di S. Domenico, and is easily recognizable from the commemorative stone which has been affixed to the house underneath a small statue of St. Paul of the Cross, placed there by some devout townsfolk of Ovada on the occasion of his beatification. It is recorded in the notes that, as in the case of Paul, our Father and Founder, heaven willed to give a token of his future holiness in the sudden light which filled the room at the moment of his birth. So heaven seemed to foreshadow the sanctity of John Baptist in the extraordinary pleasure which, during her pregnancy, his mother took in the practice of prayer, from which in the course of

those months, she could never altogether disengage herself. Thus, perhaps, our Lord may have willed to give a sign of the spirit which was to animate the child, the spirit, that is, of recollection, prayer, and union with God. The future, at all events, went for to justify this pious supposition, when his parents began to instil into him those sentiments of religion and piety on which their system of education was founded, and to which he readily corresponded. To these, by good fortune, was added the lively example given by their first-born, Paul, who was already beginning to run in the way of virtue and holiness; so that the little John Baptist soon became, like his brother, a source for them of comfort and hope. And certainly it must have been a great consolation in that blessed home to see the two boys always together, adorning little altars, intent on prayer, and trying to imitate as far as they could the lives of monks, by retirement, recollection, and acts of mortification, altogether unlike children of their tender years.

When, however, they were of an age to be trained for the serious business of life, their parents took occasion, on their removal to Cremolino, a town not far from Ovada, to confide them to the care of an excellent priest. The progress they made under his tuition is attested by a fact which happened one day as they were on their way from Ovada to Cremolino. Having both fallen into the river Olba they were being carried away by the strong current, when a most noble and heavenly lady appeared to them and taking them by the hand drew them forth from the waters safe and sound. The event was a certain pledge of the

protection which the most holy Mary had extended to these two souls, and of her pleasure in their good conduct.

On the completion of the elementary course of literature, John Baptist, then about fifteen years of age, returned, together with his brother Paul to to the family, who at that time were at Castellazzo; and it was on this occasion that they agreed together as to the kind of life they intended to follow. No words can better convey an idea of their intentions than those of our holy Founder himself, who, after his brother's death, described the system of life which he undertook at this time; although, without intending to do so, he was describing his own, for of course it was common to them both. Our holy Father, then, related how his brother John Baptist began from that time, although it was winter, to rise very early in the morning, and how, barefoot and half dressed, he withdrew to an oratory arranged in their own house, to recite the divine office and engage in prayer for several hours. Afterwards he would dress and go to Church, and since he was careful to do nothing which would draw attention to himself, while at the same time he sought solitude, he usually chose the Capuchin Church where, in some hidden corner, he would kneel on the pavement for three or four hours, until his knees became covered with callosities of the consistency of leather. Later, he returned to the house, where he would remain almost always silent and recollected in God. When he had eaten what was necessary with the rest of the family, he went alone into the field, carrying with him as a rule

the works of St. Francis de Sales, from which he read and meditated, occupying himself for the rest of the day in holy thoughts and devout affections.

So much we learn from the information let drop by our holy Founder almost unawares, for he was much averse to tell anything which might possibly redound to his own praise. For the rest there remain to us the recollections of one of his sisters, who adds that the two brothers, instead of sleeping, would leave their beds at night, and go, crucifix in hand, to an upper room to repose on bare boards, with bricks for pillows, and that at certain hours they would rise and discipline themselves unmercifully. This continued for a long time until their father, who became aware of it by chance, forbade them to continue.

A manner of life so fervent, however much they tried to conceal it, could not remain hidden from the eyes of the townspeople, who were so edified that they called the brothers "young Saints." Hell itself seems to have been moved by it, since our holy Founder himself describes how at that time the devil often appeared to John Baptist when he was trying to sleep, disturbing and tempting him; once, indeed, he avenged him on the victim who offered so great a resistance to his efforts, by striking one of his legs so severely that he almost lamed him for the rest of his life. But all such endeavors on the part of the evil one, only increased the fervor of God's servant in the practice of virtue, and in the manner of life he had undertaken.

CHAPTER II.

HOW, AFTER MANY TRIALS, HE ASSUMED THE
HABIT OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

IT IS not surprising that a spirit so completely given to mortification and to converse with God, should produce fruits of a nature altogether extraordinary. And in fact the fire of divine love, fed by constant meditation on Christ's bitter Passion, burning in his soul with daily increasing ardor, bred in him the impulse to adopt a life of still greater penance and of complete retirement from the world; until, one day, beginning to put his desires into execution, he took off his shoes, with the intention of going barefoot for the future. His brother Paul, who was aware of this, and who, already enlightened by God with secret and celestial inspirations, was intent on considering what precise manner of life he should adopt, judged his brother's fervor precocious; he therefore reproved him gently and ended by ordering him to put on his shoes again. "It falls," he said, "to me, as the elder, to lead the way, and to you to follow." John Baptist, who had a profound respect for his brother, bowed at once to his decision, and resigned himself to await the hour appointed by heaven for the realization of his cherished idea.

Paul, as a matter of fact, had already submitted to his director, Monsignor Gattinari, bishop of Alessandria, the lights and heavenly graces communicated to him by God in prayer, and had received from the prelate not merely en-

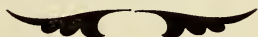
couragement and blessing, but also permission to retire into solitude to the hermitage of S. Stephen, near Castellazzo, and to remain there, clad in a habit of black, leading a life of penance. Here, in the midst of continual prayer, vigils and mortification, he perfected his plans for the establishment of the Congregation and compiled its Rule. This temporary separation by no means diminished in John Baptist his determination to join his elder brother; and therefore, although resigned to the delay, he visited him every day to converse with him and to arrange in what manner they might arrive at an agreement. But if Paul's aspirations were no less fervent, he did not think it opportune just then to put them into execution, desiring rather to assure himself of the truth of those lights which had come to him in prayer, and by means of which it seemed to him that God had inspired him to gather companions about him and to establish in His Church the work of the Congregation.

And the time was not far off: for when Paul had consulted with Monsignor Gattinara on every point, the bishop bade him go to Rome to obtain, if he could, the approval of the Rules and Institute which our Lord had revealed to him. We may well imagine with what insistence John Baptist besought his brother that he might bear him company on his journey; but persuade as he would, consent was refused, and Paul would only allow him to see him on his way as far as Genoa. Memorable, however, were the words, which, as they parted, John Baptist said to Paul. "Go, go if you will; but be sure of this, you will not be able to

stand or have peace without me." Prophetic words ! Paul embarked for Civita Vecchia and reached Rome ; but, unable to obtain an audience with the Pope, returned, and stayed at Monte Argentaro, at the sight of which, on his journey South, he had felt an unusual and extraordinary satisfaction. Here he took up his abode in the hermitage of the SS. Annunziata, and led a life of continual prayer and penance to obtain from God light to know His most holy will. But however much he might pray and use every expedient to find peace and comfort, they were denied him ; until his brother's parting admonition recurred to his mind, bringing with it instant calm and tranquillity.

Without delay he set out for his native town, where, as soon as he arrived, he arranged with John Baptist to join in common life. Having prepared a habit after the pattern of the one he had adopted a year previously, Paul obtained M. Gattinara's permission that his brother should assume it on November 21, 1721, the feast of our Lady's Presentation, and become his companion in the hermitage of S. Stephen. When we remember the ardor of the desire entertained by John Baptist for so long a time, we can easily imagine his content on such an occasion. And when the modest function was over, they both repaired to that humble dwelling, wearing only their simple tunic, barefoot and bareheaded. For food, they relied on the daily offering of passers-by. One of their sisters, giving evidence in the course of the processes for the beatification of St. Paul of the Cross, declared that once, when she visited them

late in the day, she asked them whether they had tasted food, and understanding that their fast was yet unbroken, she hastened home to prepare and bring them their portions. But they would not accept them, until compelled to do so by their father's command. For the rest, their time was passed in perfect solitude. They left their dwelling only to go to Church, where they assisted at Mass and the other offices, remaining in prayer until a late hour, when they returned to the hermitage to resume their exercises of devotion and penance



CHAPTER III.

HE RETIRES WITH HIS BROTHER TO MONTE ARGENTARO; AND GOES WITH HIM TO GAETA, TO TROJA AND TO ROME, WHERE HE IS ORDAINED PRIEST.

JOHN BAPTIST continued to live with his brother in the hermitage of St. Stephen for about three months; after which they decided to retire to Monte Argentaro, where Paul on his return from Rome had been inspired to take up his residence. With the leave and blessing of the bishop of Alessandria, the brothers, in February, 1722, set out for Genoa, whence they sailed for Civita Vecchia, making the rest of their journey on foot to Monte Argentaro, where they arrived in time for the Easter festival.

From this moment John Baptist became the inseparable companion of his elder brother, not merely sharing his habitation, but also that mode of life which Paul had begun to practise, conformable to the idea of the new Institute he hoped to establish. What that system of life was it is unnecessary to describe. We have already said something of it in the introduction, and it is fully given in the life of our holy Founder. Suffice it to say that John Baptist was in no way behind his brother in the practice of austerities and penance, and in the spirit of prayer and converse with God; so that it may be truly said of him that he emulated the lives of the holy anchorites of Egypt and Palestine.

The reader may easily imagine the joy with which one already serious and thoughtful by nature and inclination, must have repaired to the solitude of Monte Argentaro, where everything inspired detachment, recollection and meditation. It was his invariable habit, during the space of nearly two years of which we are now speaking, to remain in an almost perpetual silence, and to retire during the day to the densest parts of the neighboring forest, there to engage in holy meditation and study of the holy Scripture: and to macerate his flesh with sharp disciplines. In the hermitage itself, having satisfied the observances agreed upon with his brother, he retired apart, to give his fervor full play and exercise himself in devout and penitential practices. His bed consisted of planks, if indeed it can be said that he used them for sleeping at all; for as a rule he passed the time in watching and prayer. He

fasted daily, and at the hour fixed for the common meal, ate only a few vegetables or herbs, and of these only a small quantity. And if we remember that on festivals it was his invariable custom to go down to the village of S. Stefano to catechise the poor, we shall not wonder that such a way of life excited the admiration of the people. And so it did. The fame of his virtue spread not only in the near neighborhood of the hermitage, but far and wide. Among others who heard of it was Monsignor Pignatelli, bishop of Gaeta, who felt himself inspired to call the brothers to his diocese; and they, on their part, thought it advisable to accept the invitation, in the hope that our Lord might open a way for the establishment of the Congregation. After a wearisome journey, they reached Gaeta in June, 1722, and having received a loving welcome from the bishop, installed themselves in the hermitage of the Madonna della Catena, — Our Lady of the Chain, — about two miles from the city. Here, it is needless to say, they resumed the life already begun on Monte Argentaro; while at the same time they fulfilled the bishop's intention by helping their neighbor in every way compatible with their state.

But, although the two servants of God multiplied their prayers and penances, that they might come to know His will in their regard, it was soon borne in upon them that their appointed time had not yet come. For urgent family reasons they were compelled to pay a visit to their home. On their return to Gaeta, they met Monsignor Cavalieri, bishop of Troja, in the Puglie, who besought

them to enter his diocese; and, in the constant hope that a way would be opened for the fulfilment of their designs, they consented. And it really seemed that our Lord awaited them there, to console them somewhat, for when they manifested to the bishop the lights which they had received concerning the foundation of the new Institute, they were assured by him that the work they had at heart was of God, a truly great work which would succeed by means as yet unknown.

We may mention here a circumstance which particularly concerned John Baptist, and which served to console him in the midst of the many pains and sufferings incidental to those long journeys made always barefoot and with head uncovered, without help other than the offerings of the faithful; although these were sometimes alternated with ill-treatment and abuse. We have it from his own lips that on the occasion of a visit to the neighboring sanctuary of St. Michael the Archangel, on Monte Gargano, he received, during the night, as he knelt in prayer with his brother outside the door of the Church, two distinct intimations from heaven. The first of them was made in the following words: *Visitabo vos in virga ferrea, et dabo vobis Spiritum Sanctum.*—I shall visit you with an iron rod, and I shall give you the Holy Spirit. The second was thus expressed: *Cruce venit, crux tua, crux mundi.*—A cross cometh; a cross for thee, a cross for the world. In these warnings, God seems to have foretold to His servant the contradictions he might expect to suffer, and at the same time the chastisements which

were hanging over the world: which, to his burning love and zeal, would be a continual cross.

After spending some time in the service of their neighbor, the brothers, encouraged by Monsignor Cavalieri, determined on a second visit to Rome, to obtain, if possible, permission from the Holy See to form a Community, and establish the new Institute; and at the same time to gain the Indulgence of the Jubilee, which occurred that year. As usual, they journeyed as pilgrims, and our Lord failed not to console them by repeating the inspirations they had already received from Him as to their cherished purpose. His providence, indeed, disposed not only that various distinguished persons in the capital should be greatly edified by their bearing and holy intentions, but that the holy Father himself should receive them on the occasion of a visit he paid to the Church of S. Maria in Navicella on Monte Celio, where, *viva vocis oraculo*, he granted their request as far as the formation of a Community was concerned.

Of the joy and thankfulness to God, which filled the two brothers it is needless to speak. They waited for nothing else, but set out immediately for Gaeta, where it seemed to them possible to make their foundation. But God, who had otherwise disposed, caused obstacles to arise which, in the first place, obliged them to change the site of their proposed Retreat, and then induced them to return to Rome, there to await some clearer intimation of the divine will. Although they promised to turn out well, matters progressed but slowly. Cardinal Corradini, who had been protector of the brothers from

the beginning, wished them, for the time being, to occupy themselves in assisting the sick in the hospital then in course of building near S. Gallicano; and they readily fell in with his desire. Not long afterwards, his Eminence persuaded them to be ordained priests, to the end that they might the better serve the spiritual interests of the patients; and in this matter, also, the servants of God obeyed him, although not without great repugnance and fear, inspired by their humility, which was only overcome by an express command.

Particulars are lacking as to the precise circumstances which attended the celebration of John Baptist's first Mass; we only know that he was ordained priest, together with his brother, by Pope Benedict XIII himself, who, in that year, 1727, held an ordination in the Vatican Basilica. But our knowledge of the fervor which animated him, enables us to form a faint idea of the fullness of grace and abundance of devotion which he would feel on such a solemn occasion.

And in truth its results were soon evident in the zeal which the servant of God developed to the advantage, chiefly, of the patients in the hospital of S. Gallicano; and their efforts would have been more abundant still, had not God placed the two brothers in circumstances which led them to a clearer conviction that the long-desired moment for the foundation of the Congregation was fast approaching. First, a letter from home, announcing the death of their father, forced them to ask permission to return to their family to put certain matters in order; and the notes tell us that

they were both at home in the December of 1727, and how they fell ill together of tertian fever. The necessary business despatched, they set out again for Rome and took up their work at the hospital. However, the Cardinal Prefect, seeing that their health suffered, decided to obtain for them the Pope's permission to retire once more into solitude, and to persevere in their original vocation. Behold how wonderful are the ways of God, and how everything contributed to the fulfillment of His ends, notwithstanding the intentions of men, which are often opposed to them.



CHAPTER IV.

HE RETURNS TO MONTE ARGENTARO WITH HIS
BROTHER AND CO-OPERATES IN THE
FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST
RETREAT.

WE CAN IMAGINE, after reading of the various vicissitudes through which the brothers had passed, the depth of their content on seeing themselves at last free from every engagement which until now had hindered them from pursuing the work to which they felt themselves so clearly drawn. Without loss of time, they hastened to Monte Argentaro, persuaded that the hour appointed by God for the planting of the new Institute had at last arrived. After a fatiguing journey, they made their way to the hermitage of

the Annunziata, which they had occupied five years previously; but finding it occupied, they withdrew to another, lower down the mountain side, dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot. Here they found but bare walls, but these they judged shelter more than sufficient for their dwelling, and within them they resumed once more that life of prayer and penance which formed the principal object of their desires.

Preserving for a future chapter further details on this head, we may here note that Father John Baptist availed himself of these new circumstances not only to give himself with greater zeal than ever to devotional exercises, but to pursue his studies, especially of holy Scripture, in which he became extremely well versed. At the same time, he began to prepare himself for the various apostolic duties, which his future missions would entail upon him. An opportunity for a first essay in this direction speedily presented itself. The bishop of Soana, and the ruler of the Abby of the "Tre Fontane," hearing of the great good the two brothers were doing, approved them for confessions and preaching; and the action of these prelates contributed much to further the foundation of the future Institute. We are unable to give particulars as to the fruit of these early missions; we only know that the people who heard the brothers were greatly moved by the fervor of their preaching, and not less by their lives of extraordinary and unheard-of mortification.

And it was precisely one of these missions which eventually brought about the establishment of the Congregation. Although it was clear that

God intended that the first foundation should be made on Monte Argentaro, and although everyone saw the necessity for the building of a house to accomodate the subjects who now began to present themselves, the necessary means were not forthcoming. The town of Orbetello had approved the project, and had promised help in money; but two years had passed, and still there was no sign that the plan would be carried out. In the end a fervent mission given in Orbetello by the two brothers, decided the matter. So hot, indeed, was the rivalry among the townspeople in offering assistance, that shortly afterwards, during the Lent of 1733, it was possible to begin the work.

It happened, however, that our holy Father was just then called upon to preach in the Island of Elba. He therefore contented himself with marking on the site the ground-plan of the Church and Retreat, leaving the further direction of the building to Fr. John Baptist, who threw himself into the work with all possible ardor. He was the first every morning to come down from the hermitage to the site of the Retreat, when he and his companions would help in carrying stones, mortar and whatever else was necessary. With what fatigue and discomfort we can easily imagine, clad, as he was, only in his rough tunic, barefoot, and weakened by his daily fast. Such an example must have sustained all his companions, encouraging them to persevere.

And here let us relate a wonder which our Lord worked at the intercession of His servant, thus testifying His approval of the work. Father John Baptist, noticing one day the inconvenience

and waste of time, caused by the necessity of bringing water from a distance, set himself to look for possible traces of a spring nearer the scene of operations. Presently, as he approached the edge of a precipice, he felt a strong conviction that in this spot he would find the object of his search. Setting up a cross, he bade his companions follow him in procession, reciting devout prayers; and when they had reached the spot, he told one of them to dig a little and water would certainly be found. The Religious obeyed, and had scarcely shovelled away a little earth, when, to the surprise of all, a copious stream of water gushed forth. A little channel was then dug to convey the water to the building-site, and in this way much fatigue was spared. The spring still exists, and although in the course of years the body of water has somewhat diminished, it serves as a perennial reminder of a prodigy which brought much content to the heart of Fr. John Baptist and filled him with thankfulness to the Giver of all good.

With such spurs to activity, the building grew apace, so that when the holy Founder returned after Easter, the walls had risen high from the ground; but the war which broke out between the Spainards and Germans, and the opposition of evil-wishers, made it necessary to suspend operations, which could be resumed only at the end of 1737. And here we must mention another extraordinary occurrence, if only for the reason that it explains why, from this time, Fr. John Baptist added to his name that of St. Michael. When at length it was possible to con-

tinue the building, those who were opposed to the work, not content with making difficulties by their calumnious reports, determined one day to destroy it utterly. With this object in view, they assembled one night, determined to evict the solitaries from their hermitage, and to throw down the walls of the new Church and Retreat. But God, who watched over the work, disposed that when these wretches reached the spot, they should be overcome by sudden horror and fear at the sight of a heavenly vision which scattered and put them to flight. A pious inhabitant of Orbetello relates that on that particular evening, St. Michael the Archangel had appeared on Monte Argentaro, armed in terrible guise, to defend the place and repulse the assailants. In token of his gratitude towards the Prince of the Heavenly Host, Fr. John Baptist resolved to append St. Michael's name to his own, and determined, moreover, that the new Church should contain an altar in honor of its angelic defender.



CHAPTER V.

HE GOES TO ROME WITH HIS BROTHER TO OBTAIN
APPROVAL FOR THE RULES, ASSISTS IN THE
FOUNDATION OF THE RETREAT OF S.
ANGELO, NEAR VETRALLA, WHERE
HE REMAINS AS SUPERIOR.
REMARKS ON HIS
GOVERNMENT.

HAVING finished the building of the new Retreat, now the dwelling place of their little Community, the brothers determined on a more regular observance, a thing until now impossible, for lack of a place properly adapted for it. But their chief concern was to obtain the sanction of the Holy See, in order that their mode of living, formally recognized as having the qualities of religious life, might be established and perpetuated. Regarding the election of the new Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIV, as a favorable portent, both the brothers went to Rome to hear the voice of the apostolic oracle. The learned Pontiff received them kindly, and having appointed a commission to examine their Rule, restored it to the two brothers with a Brief of approbation, dated May 15th, 1741. It is unnecessary to mention the happiness thus engendered in the souls of our holy Founder and Fr. John Baptist, and the joy with which the news was received by the young Community at Monte Argentaro, after the long series of trials endured by the two brothers

before their efforts were finally crowned with success.

Their first Retreat on Monte Argentario having been solemnly inaugurated under the dedication of the Presentation of Mary most holy, they at once began a very strict observance of the Rule, with results which were soon made evident. Its immediate effect was seen in the daily increasing number of postulants; while the fame of these first Passionists was quickly spread by means of their missions, for which incessant applications were received. One of these, in which our holy Founder and Fr. John Baptist took part, given at Vetralla, in 1742, evoked such enthusiasm that the inhabitants desired at all costs to have in their midst a house of the new Institute. The proposal was welcomed by the two servants of God, who were delighted with the place offered them for the purpose, an old hermitage, dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, in a neighboring wood. Two years passed, however, before matters could be finally concluded, on account of certain difficulties which had to be overcome. At length, in the March of 1744, everything was arranged, and the holy Founder with Fr. John Baptist and eight religious went over from Monte Argentario and took possession with due solemnity.

It happened, however, that Fr. Paul of the Cross was obliged, next day, to leave the new Community that he might attend to the business of the Congregation; and it fell to the lot of Fr. John Baptist to represent him as local superior. His unwillingness when the announcement was made to him, availed him nothing. His saintly

brother put him under holy obedience to consent, and the humble Father was obliged to submit. In this Retreat of S. Angelo the holy man passed almost the whole of the twenty-one years which remained to him. We shall, therefore, begin from now to call the reader's attention to those virtues which chiefly distinguished him, whether before or after this period, in order that we may the better comprehend the spirit and the perfection which he attained.

And, to speak at once of his responsibility as Superior, it will not be difficult to persuade the reader that Fr. John Baptist was better adapted for the office than any other. He had been until then not only the constant companion, but the most intimate counsellor of our holy Founder, and his most powerful support in managing the affairs of the Congregation. Then, as to the virtues which adorned him, his holy brother confessed that he was unsurpassed by any in the Congregation, whence it was that the religious family whom this blessed man was to govern, found in him not merely a head to whom they were bound under obedience, but, what is of more importance, a true guide and a perfect model to follow.

Filled as he was with the greatest zeal for the good of the Congregation, he spared no effort to keep alive and fervent the spirit of observance, and to keep at a distance anything which could diminish its ardor. He used to speak of our Institute as "the Congregation of the just;" "the Union of the true sons of God," and ceaselessly begged in his prayers that our Lord would provide men who were holy, fit and strong to sustain it.

He made it a rule to be very slow and rather rigorous in accepting postulants, lest an excessive facility in admitting applicants should cool its fervor. "Few people," he would often say, "few and good;" and writing to a priest of the Congregation, he remarked, "We must beg God with assiduous prayer that He would deign to keep the Congregation purged of all those who might in any way occasion disturbance or scandal, and to keep from us the unfit and those who are too delicate for our observance."

And if he was so exacting about matters of observance where others were concerned, the reader can easily imagine his severity in his own regard - Although appointed Superior, and remaining such with little interruption until his death, he never altered his manner of life, nor did he ever abate his fervor, so that he always seemed like a novice; while his joy in retirement, silence and recollection, and his love of prayer, mortification and penance, his detachment from every created thing, were for all a theme of continual admiration. What shall we say, then, of his punctuality and diligence in observing the Rule? "Fr. John Baptist," (we quote from the notes,) "was always among the first to come to the choir and other Community duties, and he was so careful that the signals should be sounded exactly at the appointed hours, that if by chance they were a few minutes behind time, he would run, even in his old age, and supply the deficiency with edifying promptitude. When he observed negligence in any one, he was intensely sorry, and although he would sometimes appear not to notice such

shortcomings, from motives of prudence, at other times he would sharply reprove the transgressor. He would do this, however, in the fewest possible words; and very often a severe look was enough to warn or correct a delinquent.

“Nevertheless, it must not be supposed that his rule was hard or burdensome, for however exigent he might be in the matter of punctual observance, everyone understood that he was actuated by reason and duty, while none could complain that Fr. John Baptist neglected to do himself that which he exacted from others. It must be remembered, further, that his sole object being to draw others to the love of God, he knew how to clothe himself in human weakness and accommodate himself to circumstances, that he might win everyone to this same love. When local Superior, he easily gave his consent to things in themselves innocent and not opposed to the holy Rule, and in cases of special need, he was ever ready to use a saintly discretion, without giving occasion for importunity. It is related of him, among other things, that a young student having told him that he was very hungry, he immediately answered, ‘Eat, my son; and if one loaf is not enough, I will make them bring you a second,’ as in fact he did. Nor was he averse, especially where the young students were in question, to give permission for the laudable recreation of a country walk, in which he would often accompany them, taking care that they were provided with some refreshment, according to circumstances. By this pleasant and charitable method, he secured contentment among the religious whose love

and esteem for him helped them to be faithfully fervent in all that concerned holy observance.

“To the same end he was much assisted by his rare prudence in all that he did. One of his maxims, which he would often repeat, was, ‘One must foresee, and provide in time.’ He accordingly thought much before he acted: he first consulted God in prayer, then he would seek the advise of others, and finally he would act, but always with great peace in his soul. On this subject we find written, among his resolutions: ‘Prudence, respect and reverence for priests and companions; keep myself from discouraging them, and practise that counsel of St. James, *Tardus ad loquendum*.—Be slow to speak. After receiving news of consequence, take time to reply. Reflect, reflect, reflect in speech.’ In another place we find written, ‘Be always careful not to speak, and not to put thyself forward where thou seest that thy words and deeds please not.’

“But although he moved with such caution, whenever his advise was asked, or when anyone went to him for consolation, the bowels of his charity were opened at once, and it poured forth with such eloquence, unction and fervor that everyone was edified and comforted. It was one of his special characteristics that in any matter, whether public or private, he would, before replying, ask *Quid dicit Scriptura?*—What saith the Scripture? In fact, all his discourse, his decisions and advise were always based on passages and examples drawn from holy Scripture, adapted to the capacity, needs and condition of the persons

concerned, in such a way that what he said both pleased and convinced them."

In short, Fr. John Baptist seemed to have been purposely raised up by God to be the chief support of our holy Founder in the work of the new Institute. Because, if on one side, we admit that his character inclined rather to be rigid and austere, we cannot deny, on the other, that he well knew how to discern needs, circumstances, times and persons: whence it was that if he stood firm when it was necessary to sustain the cause of God, like a wall which cannot be thrown down, so he was able, when need was, with equal facility to support, like a tender mother, the weakness of others. And in this we find the reason why, under his rule, things went forward in perfect order, with much peace and to the general satisfaction of the Religious, notwithstanding the terrible trials of every kind which, in those days of first beginning, had to be met.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY.

WHAT has been said, so far, of Father John Baptist, should suffice to convince us that his life was based upon humility, the firm foundation of all other virtues. From the day on which he determined to follow in the footsteps of his elder brother, he was subject to him in all

things, never caring to have his opinion adopted or to be an object of consideration under any circumstances whatever. As we have seen, our holy Founder, when he appointed him Superior of the new Retreat of S. Angelo, was obliged to exert all the force of authority before he could induce him to accept the position. Nor was less persuasion necessary to prevail upon him to take the first place in the Community; for, although he had yielded when the post of Superior was forced upon him, he had intended, nevertheless, to reserve for himself, what seemed to him, in his humility, the privilege of the last place. This dislike of precedence was no momentary thing; it was always maintained, even after his election as first Consultor General. His bearing never altered in the least, and only those who knew him were able to distinguish him from his brethren. To hear him accuse himself in Chapter or in the Refectory, was a source of general edification, because he did so in phrases which denoted his intimate conviction of his spiritual wretchedness.

It was the same when he became aware that his zeal and fervor had betrayed him, perhaps, into some hasty expression; he became filled with confusion and humbled himself before all. But it must not be supposed that this confusion produced in him anything in the nature of depression or spiritual exhaustion, as happens in the case of assumed humility; it only served him as a means of acknowledging his misery, and of keeping a closer watch on himself for the future. He had, it is true, a poor opinion of himself, as a wretched

sinner, and would often quote those words of the Holy Spirit: "Who can say: my heart is clean, and I am pure and immune from all sin?" or those of St. Augustine: "Many sins which escape my eyes, O Lord, are visible to Thee;" but on the other hand, it was a maxim of his that after we have sinned, it is absolutely necessary not to be too much cast down or dismayed, but rather to have recourse, with lively and reverential confidence, to God, the Father of mercies, in Whom no one ever trusted and remained confounded.

But the humility of this servant of God was manifested even more in his anxiety to avoid the shadow of anything which could redound to his own praise. Among his papers was found the following note: "Humility has many degrees; but it consists chiefly in thinking little of oneself; in not preferring oneself to anyone; in the desire to be subject to all; and in refusing every honor in this world." From his lips never fell a word which could redound to his own honor or esteem, while at the same time he would not say anything to his own disadvantage; because, as he said, self-love is very subtle, and is gratified even when we speak evil of ourselves. Whence it was with him a custom, which he endeavored to instil into others, not to speak of himself at all, but to treat himself as one dead and forgotten.

He was so sensitive on this point, that if it seemed to him that anyone offended against humility in his conversation, he would admonish him with the remark: "See, the hen has laid an egg." He did not even hesitate to make it more than once to our holy Founder himself, when, out

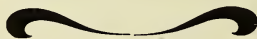
of sheer simplicity, or for the edification of the Religious, he happened to tell of something which had befallen him. And once, when the Saint, in the presence of Don Tommaso Struzzieri, was speaking of the Congregation, which the latter thought of entering, let fall some expressions which might redound to his own praise, Fr. John Baptist, interrupting the conversation, exclaimed: *Non qui seipsum commendat; sed quem Deus commendat*—Not he that commendeth himself is approved; but he whom God commendeth. The mortification was taken in good part by the Saint, and served to confirm the perfection of each of the brothers.

This scrupulous caution on the part of Fr. John Baptist, as is remarked in the notes, may have been very helpful to himself, but the Congregation has suffered by it, inasmuch as it has deprived us of many particulars concerning our holy Founder and the events of those early days, which would have redounded to the glory of God. Be that as it may, it is certain that his aim was holy, and therefore we may regard our loss as the disposition of divine providence.

In giving his missions, zealous though he was to spare himself neither fatigue nor inconvenience, he was most careful to avoid anything which might bring him applause or admiration. He sought nothing else but the glory of God and the salvation of souls; caring nought for other things. A similiar motive impelled him, as soon as the mission was over, to leave the scene of his labors; and therefore, lest anyone out of devotion might wish to accompany him, he would depart

before the appointed hour, and await his companions at some place on the road.

We will end the present chapter by quoting some of his thoughts on this subject, found among his papers: "To be a truly apostolic man means not to wish for applause when you preach better than another; not to wish that you should be more popular as a spiritual director than another: but to desire that the Crucified should be the sole object of applause and popularity." Replying to one of our Religious, he said: "Let us pray assiduously that the Most High may permit us to turn always to Him, with contrite and humble hearts, that we may die in the Congregation with the grace of final perseverance. They tell me that in Terracina people esteem our brethren very highly and that when they see them they say: 'There go the holy Fathers.' But I tell you that he who knows the real value of human esteem, attaches little or no importance to it, because as a rule it is unable to weigh or judge what person is really worthy of consideration."



CHAPTER VII.

HIS FORTITUDE AND PATIENCE.

WE have seen that notwithstanding his disesteem for himself, Fr. John Baptist was far from giving way to any depression of soul which might have caused him to withdraw himself from good works. Let us now remark, on the contrary,

how strong and ardent was his spirit, and how firm and constant he was in that which he knew to be God's will and pleasure.

Meditate a moment on the singular hardness of the life he began while yet a boy. At that early age he left home in company with his brother, St. Paul of the Cross, and, having overcome the opposition of the Saint, led a life of solitude and penance not less extraordinary than his. We may also call to mind his long journeys which he made wearing nothing but a rough tunic, bareheaded and without shoes in summer and winter; without provisions or letters of recommendation, and more often than not, meeting with derision, not only from the lower orders, but from people of position. All this was as nothing to Fr. John Baptist.

What shall we say of the strength and patience with which he met the various difficulties which arose in the way of the establishment of the Congregation? Those who have read the life of our holy Founder will have gathered some idea of his perfection in this respect, for they know that Fr. John Baptist was the Saint's inseparable companion, his most intimate counsellor, and his strongest support. If the foundation of our Institute cost our holy Father thirty years of continual strife and unspeakable tribulations, the same is equally true of Fr. John Baptist because, from first to last, he took a principal part in the undertaking.

Let us add the sorrows which he had to bear in the continual exercise of missions and in his duties as Superior. For the reason given in the

previous chapter, the reminiscences of his apostolic ministry which have come down to us are scarce and few. It is recorded, however, that he told one who was his frequent companion in his missionary labors that every time he engaged in this work, he experienced so much distress, depression and repugnance in seeing and hearing the spiritual wretchedness of the people, that he had to exert all the strength of his will to prevent himself from going straight back to his beloved solitude. To obtain some idea of the patience and fortitude which he had to exercise after his election as Superior, we have only to remember that in those early beginnings, obstacles of every sort had to be encountered; the inconvenience and smallness in our houses, the austerity of the Rule, want of means and provisions, the criticism and opposition of evil-wishers, and the murmurings of the discontented; in a word, continual strife was necessary. And yet, Fr. John Baptist was always firm, unchangeable and constant in sentiment and in action; so that if the Congregation issued victorious from its trouble, the fact is in great part due to Fr. John Baptist, who never ceased to help it by his advice, by his prayers, and above all, by his example, which served as a perpetual admonition and spur to the weak and captious, and in the end caused the opponents of the Institute to desist.

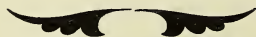
On this head, he wrote in his notes: "If anyone feels irritated or disgusted for some reason, let him, at the first opportunity, show himself affable with the person who has been the cause of the disturbance, and remember the words of the

Holy Spirit: *Sapientia hominis lucet in vultu ejus.*—The wisdom of a man shineth in his countenance. (Eccl. 8.)” Also, “When men deceive us, let us suffer, pursuing our way in simplicity of heart. Let us practise docility with our companions, and do what they wish us to do, without any opposition.” All of which things he faithfully practised, and, except in matters where the glory of God or the good of the Congregation was concerned, he sought not to interfere, but to keep apart and mind his own affairs.

Let us quote some of the sentiments which he set down to animate himself in the practise of patience. Commenting on the words of the Holy Spirit: *Melior est vir patiens viro forti.*—Better is a patient man than a strong man, he wrote: “The fortitude of heroic soldiers consists in action; the strength of the patient in suffering; but it requires more fortitude to be patient than to do great things. It is not the man brave in arms, but the patient in heart who conquers himself, and who resists the monstrous passions which rule the world, he it is who takes the kingdom of heaven by assault.” Commenting on that other text, *Quos diligit Deus, castigat: flagellat autem omnem filium quem recipit*—For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth; He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, he wrote: “Divine government is of two kinds, one of nature, the other of grace. The rich and powerful are better treated by God in the order of nature; while the poor and afflicted are better treated in the order of grace, of which a single degree is worth more than all the gifts of nature. Adversity not only manifests God’s love

for the afflicted, but also the value He sets upon them. The boys who succeed best are the most thought of by the school master, and veteran soldiers are put by their leaders in the hottest part of the battle. To be left to rust in idleness is the severest of divine judgments. *Dimisi eos secundum desideria cordis eorum*—I let them go according to the desires of their heart. The demons deride the goodness of those just persons who have not been tried with many tribulations. The poor and afflicted are less in debt with God, and their distress and tears are as ready money with which to pay their debts to His justice. The joy of being treated on earth as the Son of God and as His Mother, and as all the greater Saints were treated, is above all the joys of the world.”

No wonder that the servant of God, supported by such sentiments in the midst of so many difficulties, criticisms and adversities, always maintained peace and calm of heart, which he sought in God and in obedience to His holy will, where alone they are to be found.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS EXTRAORDINARY MORTIFICATION.

FATHER John Baptist's chief care seems to have consisted in a ceaseless war against his inclinations, his desires and his senses; to such a degree that his existence may be truly said to have been one continual mortification of so severe a

kind as to have resembled the life of the most penitential solitaries of the desert. Among the texts of holy Scripture which had most impressed him and were most often on his lips, one was:

Qui sunt Christi carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis suis—They that are Christs' have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences. He accordingly wrote down many notes to serve him as an occasional stimulus, from among which we may quote the following: "Strait is the way and narrow the gate of heaven; therefore, the desire to go there in a carriage and to take earthly baggage with one is impossible. Easy is the road and wide the gate of salvation; but only for those who, with David, seek nothing but to save themselves — *Ambulabam in latitudine quia mandata tua exquisivi*.—And I walked at large, because I have sought after Thy commandments. To wish to be clothed in grace without ridding oneself of nature, is to desire an impossible compromise. To wish to be saved and desire neither penance nor cross, is to desire the consequence without the necessary antecedent; to wish for victory without a fight, is to desire, and at the same time not to desire salvation."

It is quite possible that the perusal of these sentences will lead the reader to suppose that there was nothing exceptional in Fr. John Baptist's spirit of mortification. To arrive at a different conclusion, it is necessary to understand the deep feeling with which he pondered them and imprinted them on his heart. He did not merely interpret them in their strictest sense, but put them in practise to the very letter. The very

sight of Fr. John Baptist was sufficient to convince people of his mode of life. His meek and lowly deportment, the look of recollection on his face, his thin and emaciated figure were proofs which persuaded all. As to details, we regret that his care to keep his private affairs from the eyes of men, has left us without information, as to his severe penances, save in a few instances. We only gather from the notes that he was so intent on the combat with his appetites, that he availed himself of every possible occasion to contradict them.

It is related that during the building of the Retreat on Monte Argentaro, Fr. John Baptist offered his snuff-box to one of the workmen who, as he was in the act of taking it, fell to the ground and hurt his nose; whereupon the servant of God said: "I understand: this is a warning to me in punishment for the pleasure I have given my nostrils until now; from to-day I will take no more snuff." And he kept to his resolution for the rest of his life. Such was the guard which he kept on his tongue, that no one ever heard him speak without real necessity. To the world and all earthly things he had bidden farewell, and with respect to them he regarded himself as dead; whence he was content with everything, without ever complaining; nor did he ever look for conveniences and comforts, finding his happiness rather in pain and suffering. From the moment in which he became his holy brother's companion, he not only followed his example in all fidelity, but seemed to rival him in austerity of life; so much so, that St. Paul of the Cross did not hesi-

tate to write: "Fr. John Baptist serves me as a spur to run in the way of the divine precepts."

To understand what this spur was, we have only to read of the severe mortifications which our holy Father was accustomed to practise, and then to bear in mind that they were suggested to him by the word and example of Fr. John Baptist. We are told that the latter used to wake him very early in the morning, although he knew that the Saint had little or no sleep; he controlled him in the matter of food, even so far as to take it away from him if he thought that he was eating with enjoyment; he watched his every word, and, I might almost say, his every step, taking from each some occasion to mortify him, so that his virtue and perfection might always increase.

As to food, it may be truly said that Fr. John Baptist fasted every day, and that he ate so sparingly that everyone wondered how his strength was maintained. In his declining years he was tormented by weakness of stomach, which was probably the result to past abstinence, and in consequence of this ailment his food caused him so much suffering that he sighed after eating not less than before. For the rest, his indifference in the matter of diet was such that he seemed to have lost all sense of taste.

How shall we speak of the way in which he macerated his body with instruments of penance? A mere glance at what is written on this head in the notes makes one shudder. To the mortifications practised by the Community, which in those early days, were extremely severe, Fr. John Baptist added others in private. It is related that one

day, during his residence on Monte Argentaro, a shepherd was so frightened at the noise of blows, which came from a thicket in the wood, that, without waiting to find out the cause, he fled to his companions, with whom, next day, he returned to the spot and watched. Great indeed was their surprise when presently they beheld Fr. John Baptist approach and begin to discipline his naked shoulders until the blood came. On another occasion he was discovered by one of the Religious in the depth of the wood, taking the discipline with half a horse-shoe tied to a rope. An officer of the Spanish troops, then quartered in Orbetellò, related that one day as he was shooting on Monte Argentaro, not far from the Retreat, he heard a sound resembling the clink of chains. Curiosity led him to hide for a time, until presently he saw Fr. John Baptist kneeling in a small open space, before a crucifix, scourging his bare shoulders with an iron chain. Horrified at the sight, he had not the heart to go nearer, but went to the Retreat to warn the Fathers that their colleague seemed to be intent on taking his own life. Hastening to the spot, they put an end to the terrible butchery, not without much grief and confusion on the part of God's servant, whom they were obliged to carry to the Retreat in their arms. Nor was this all, because he was so careful, as has been remarked, to conceal his penances; but the curiosity of some watchful brothers has preserved for us some few details concerning them. It was discovered one day that he kept in a book-case two small chains armed with points and twisted together in the form of a girdle for wearing round the waist.

Another time, a discipline used by him was discovered; this was of iron with a ball studded with sharp points at the end of the thong. The reader may imagine how the body of Fr. John Baptist was macerated with instruments of this kind, used by a hand rendered strong by the fervor which filled his spirit. We are bound to say that in this he deserved praise rather than imitation.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS EXACTITUDE IN OBSERVING THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS.

FROM the moment in which Fr. John Baptist knew the value of Christian perfection, he became so anxious to possess it, that without an instant's delay he embraced the means which lead to its acquirement. From his youth up he gave himself to the practise of the evangelical counsels with such diligence and fervor that his subsequent vows were but a confirmation of resolves made long before. No sooner had he decided to imitate the example of his elder brother than, like him, he despised and despoiled himself completely of everything that he might follow Christ. His renunciation was such that not only did he make to God the sacrifice of every comfort and convenience, but even of necessities.

Let us observe him in those years during which he journeyed with his brother to Monte

Argentaro, to Rome, to Gaeta, and to the Puglie. During the whole of this time the life of Fr. John Baptist was that of a poor man; nay, it was more, for it was his rule to ask for nothing, not even by way of alms. When at last the Retreat of the Presentation was founded, he had to endure unspeakable sacrifices in the matter of poverty, owing to the increase in the number of the Community, and the want of means to provide the bare necessities of life. Nor did his trials end here; for, almost as soon as this first Retreat was firmly established, the servant of God was transferred to the new foundation of S. Angelo. near Vetralla, where he found nothing but a wretched hovel. Nevertheless, he was quite content, remaining in residence here for many years in the midst of great sufferings and privations. Indeed, such was his pleasure in them that when other cells were added for the convenience of the Community, he preferred to remain in his old one, ruinous as it was, until his death, nor would he even allow it to be repaired or put in proper condition.

As to the few articles needful for his own use, he wished them to be clean, for he was a great enemy of dirt, but he would allow no singularity; he restricted himself to such objects as were absolutely necessary, and these of the simplest and poorest that could be found. Nor was he less careful to observe the spirit of poverty in their use; he would never, for instance, waste the wood provided for fuel, nor the crumbs of the bread which he ate.

In the matter of chastity, it may with equal

truth be said that as from his earliest years he devoted himself with ardent love to the custody of this angelic virtue, so did he always preserve it intact. It was one of his maxims never to trust himself on this point, and to fly every occasion of sin with all his might, even at the expense of hearing himself called by ridiculous nick-names. He deplored with hot tears the licentious manners of the day, and used to say: "Licentiousness does more harm to Christianity than the persecution of tyrants: the latter makes martyrs, but the former produces wicked men. Persecution produces confessors of the gospel, but licentiousness turns men into cruel enemies of the same."

He wrote down certain weighty quotations from the holy Scripture and from the Fathers, which he often read over and kept ever before him as practical rules of conduct. We read, among others, the text from Isaias, Chapter 33: *Claudit vir oculos suos ne videat malum*—He shutteth his eyes that he may see no evil,—on which he comments: "What is this evil so prejudicial to man? The Holy Spirit Himself tells us when He says: *Speciem mulieris alienæ multi admirati, reprobi facti sunt*—Many by admiring the beauty of women have become reprobate." He quotes from Ecclesiasticus, Chapter 12, with reference to conversation: *In medio mulierum noli commovari*, on which he remarks: "Why? Because *De vestimentis procedit tineu, et a muliere iniquitas viri*." Among the passages which he quotes from the holy Fathers, we find that of St. Gregory of Nazianzen, *Eam familiaritatem odi, quam et per aerem contrahitur*; "that is to say," adds Fr. John Baptist, "that

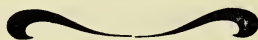
the mere voice of a woman suffices to poison." Let not the reader imagine, however, that the servant of God refused assistance when called upon; to no one did he deny the benefit of his advice, if it was asked, while he was ever ready to administer the Sacraments. Where he showed himself inflexible was in the use of St. Augustine's maxim, *Cum mulieribus sermo brevis et rigidus*. And here again, let us give some rules which he made for himself and wrote down with his own hand: "1. If, to oblige one's companions, one must sit at table with women, to be careful neither to give nor receive anything from them. 2. Modesty, conformably to the saying of the Psalmist, *Beatus vir qui non respicit in vanitates et insanias falsus*. 3. Religious gravity, as the Holy Spirit says, *Sapientia hominis lucet in vultu ejus*. 4. Priestly gravity, and never to address anyone as 'thou,' especially women; neither give them the least confidence, however devout they may be, nor appear at all concerned about their affairs. 5. When it is necessary to visit houses for spiritual objects, to remember St. Augustine's saying that those who expect to find the gift of chastity *in aliena domo cum extraneis mulieribus*, are very rash."

Passing to the subject of obedience, after what has been said of his humility, it will not be difficult to persuade ourselves how readily the good Father submitted himself to the will and judgment of others. It will suffice to remember that from his earliest years it was the object of his most ardent desires to join his elder brother and live subject to him. This end achieved, we have seen how he dwelt with him in perfect

agreement, and how unwearied he was in carrying out his wishes. When, in later years, the Congregation was established and his vows pronounced, Fr. John Baptist shone still more brightly in his perfect obedience. It was enough for him to know the will of his Superior; thenceforward his lips were closed, and he submitted at once. On this head, we find written among his resolutions: "If anyone wishes to obey, let him not look for theologians with accomodating doctrines; that is to say, those who know how to adapt sin to the conscience. Obedience is of such a nature that all holiness may be reduced to it. God wishes to be obeyed in the persons of Superiors and to be recognized in them, and when we do not obey them we are disobedient to God who has given them power to command. True obedience never asks the reason of an order."

It remains to speak of the zeal which Fr. John Baptist displayed in the observance of the fourth vow which it is usual to take in our Congregation, though we find no detailed notes on this head. The memorials merely tell us that when he had occasion to preach, or to speak about the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, his eloquence expanded in a wonderful manner, although he used to say that the people capable of understanding and penetrating so august a mystery were very few. To what extent he himself was bound up in, pierced and penetrated by it, we learn from the motives by which he was animated, the austerity and mortifications of his life, the fatigues and difficulties he sustained that he might win souls to the Crucified. These are

more than sufficient to prove that the servant of God was filled with the love of his suffering Saviour, and that while he himself strove to follow closely in His footsteps, he never wearied in his efforts that others should follow them too; but this will be more clearly seen in our next chapter.



CHAPTER X.

HIS ARDENT ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

IT would seem, at first sight, unlikely that a penitent and solitary like Fr. John Baptist, would display such unusual concern about his neighbor as to become an Apostle. Facts, however, prove that he combined the spirit of an Apostle with that of a hermit. His constant desire and prayer was that God might be known and loved by all men, and he was frequently heard to exclaim: *Sanctificetur nomen tuum!* He seemed to long for the moment when the gospel should be, as he put it, solemnly preached throughout the whole world; and he deplored with tears the state of so many wretched infidels and heretics, for whose conversion he did not cease to repeat the words of the Apostle in prayer to our Lord, that he would send *operarios inconfusibiles recta tractantes verbum Dei* — workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly handling the word of God. More than once he declared himself

ready to go and convert the infidels whenever God might be pleased to send him. It was truly edifying to hear him say, even when old and weakened by austerities: "I am old, weak and infirm, it is true, but God who is strong and omnipotent, can do all things." And he would add, applying to himself the words which were written of Abraham, that although his years were many, his faith had not grown cold, neither had it become weak; but, on the contrary, it had gained strength with age.

But if the good Father was not granted the grace to shed his blood among the heathen, as he desired, he well knew how to find compensation in doing his best to secure the amendment of Christians and the sanctification of faithful souls. Scarcely had he set foot, with his brother, in the hermitage of the SS. Annunziata, on Monte Argentaro, than, urged by his zeal for the conversion of sinners, he began to go down to the village of San Stefano at the foot of the mountain to catechise the poor fishermen on festivals. He followed the same custom in the hermitage of Gaeta and in the hospital of S. Gallicano in Rome; and when, after his ordination, he withdrew again to the solitude of Monte Argentaro, this holy fire burned even more strongly within him, for which reason he spent all the time he could spare from his spiritual exercises in the study of the holy Scriptures and the Fathers, gathering good store of texts and maxims for use in his apostolic labors.

Having obtained the approval of the neighboring bishops, and due appointment as missionary apostolic, his zeal knew no bounds. Accom-

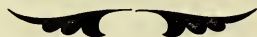
panied almost always by our holy Founder, he suffered unspeakable fatigues and hardships in procuring the salvation of souls by holy missions. Worn, as he almost always was, by fasts and penances, as well as by frequent illness, he never hesitated to seize any occasion which presented itself for the exercise of this holy ministry. As a rule, he chose, in these missions, to give the catechetical instructions, not because he was unfit to discharge more impressive functions, but because he preferred to play a comparatively insignificant part, and because of his conviction that most of the evils which prevailed in society were the result of ignorance.

And he was altogether admirable in his exercise of the ministry. In such occasions, as everyone is aware, unexpected difficulties will arise, as though to put virtue to the proof. Fr. John Baptist was always prepared to meet them; ever self-possessed, humble and patient. In all this, he was putting into practise maxims which he had written during his long period of preparation, such as the following: "True holiness is strong, but considerate; invincible, but prudent; zealous for God's cause without rashness; although it knows how and is able, yet it is not always wanting to work miracles in order to display itself; if it desires to convert, yet not for this would it destroy the world." While Fr. John Baptist, with Fr. Marcus Aurelius, was giving a course of spiritual exercises at some country place, a personage from Rome arrived there with a numerous suite, who, in company with some of the inhabitants, sang ribald songs by night under the mis-

sionaries' windows. Needless to say, the servant of God was greatly grieved at the insult offered to his holy ministrations. On the following evening, having ascended the pulpit, he denounced with extraordinary zeal the offence thus given to those who had been sent by Christ, and concluded by saying that he intended to put into practice the injunction of the gospel by shaking the dust from his feet and departing. So saying, he came down at once and prepared to leave. Upon this, all the people swarmed around him and begged him not to go, because the guilty persons were strangers. The servant of God, truly zealous for his Master, at once consented, and remained to finish the exercises, to the great spiritual advantage of the population.

In order to arm himself with this patience to meet the obstacles sometimes raised up by the devil, in order to hinder the exercise of the ministry, he wrote down many thoughts from Scripture and the Fathers. To some of these he would add brief comments, in which he gave vent to the ardent affection which possessed him when he meditated upon them. Here is an example: "The Apostle Paul, when the Macedonian appeared to him in a vision and begged him to come and help him, understood that God called him there to preach the Gospel. 'Go and convert a woman named Lydia, with her family, and the governor of the prison with his people;' and that cost him prisons, scourgings, and afflictions. Such was the fruit which St. Paul gathered in Macedonia. Wondrous God, to whom the saving of a soul was worth the expense of the journeys, sweatings and

risks of His Apostle !” From which the reader may gather some idea of the manner in which Fr. John Baptist went out to preach, and in what spirit he fulfilled his apostolic duties.



CHAPTER XI.

HIS ZEAL FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH AND HER MINISTERS.

THE zeal of the good Father for the prosperity of the Church and the sanctification of her ministers was so uncommon, that we must devote a special chapter to its consideration, for in this matter he was truly exceptional. His whole life, so the notes tell us, was passed in continual groanings, prayer and weepings for the wants of holy Church; and our holy Founder, speaking from the depth of his intimacy with the spirit of his brother, would often say: “Fr. John Baptist has shed floods of tears for the Church, and has furrowed his cheeks with constant weeping.”

Such was his esteem and reverence for the dogmas of the Church, and such the beauty and lucidity of his arguments in explaining them, that he enkindled the hearts of all who heard him. It was a pleasure to notice the emphasis with which he would say: *Ecclesia Dei columna et firmamentum veritatis*. He wished to see dignitaries and clergy fill the earth with the sunshine of sanctity; that all might be true priests *sancti verbo*

et exemplo, known as irrefutable teachers, ministers armed with uncommon gifts to confront the workers of iniquity. "And why not," he used to exclaim. "if, as holy Scripture tells us, God sent David so many heroes so brave and strong in battle that they seemed as lions and in speed outstripped the deer, why should He not endow the mystical David, His Son Jesus, and His Church, whose reign will endure forever, with ministers as numerous and more excellent in virtue to defend her from her enemies, and bring the whole world under her sway? But who shall these brave and strong men be? Those who excel in the fear of God, who think no trouble too much to secure their own salvation and their neighbors'; who love not the things of earth: this is our military discipline. To fight His battles in this world, God has chosen those who are poor, humble, and detached from earthly possessions, but rich, nevertheless, in faith."

For the realization of his ideal, Fr. John Baptist ceased not to pray, sigh and macerate his body; and because experience had taught him that laborers of this kind were very few, he fired himself with holy zeal and dedicated himself in a special way to their formation. From the holy Scriptures, as well as from the Fathers and Councils of the Church, he made extracts which might help him in this work; and whenever he was called upon to preach to the clergy, he would set before them the obligations of their state, denouncing vice and advocating reform, with such unspeakable fervor that he won for himself the name of Elias, while those who heard him were

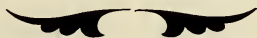
filled with admiration and confusion.

Nor to accomplish his object did he confine himself to preaching. His longing to see the clergy reformed, led him to seize every opportunity of speaking plain truth to them. It is related that during one of his missions he sent away the bishop's secretary who had called upon him in secular clothes. "This is not the way," he remarked, "in which an ecclesiastic should be dressed." On another occasion, at the Retreat of S. Eutizio, near Soriano, a certain dignitary who wished to see him, was brought to his cell by some of the Religious. The visitor's name being duly announced, Fr. John Baptist replied, "I don't know him. These are not the garments of an ecclesiastic." The prelate thereupon explained that he was only wearing the dress which it was usual to put on in the country. But in vain. "An ecclesiastic," resumed the good Father, "is always an ecclesiastic; against the holy canons custom has no force." Everyone present understood that reply was impossible, and the prelate himself, when taking his leave, confessed that Fr. John Baptist was a true servant of God, a worthy minister of Jesus Christ, devoid of human respect.

Another time a Cardinal, on his way to our Retreat of S. Angelo, near Vetralla, met the servant of God who, as he walked through the wood, was intent on study and meditation. Some members of the Cardinal's suite approached and said: "Father John Baptist, here is the Cardinal Bishop." But the holy man, looking up, merely lifted his eyebrows, as he remarked: "I took him

for a field Marshal." So far was his Eminence from taking offence that when, some time afterwards, news was brought to him that Fr. John Baptist was dead, he exclaimed: "Holy Church has lost a great man, a worthy and zealous minister," and he gave further expression to his esteem for God's servant by saying Mass for the repose of his soul.

These few instances serve to illustrate the good Father's high ideals of the priesthood and his anxiety to see God's ministers perfect in the discharge of their duties; for he was convinced that it was hopeless to expect the reform of the people without first securing that of the clergy.



CHAPTER XII.

HIS GIFT OF PRAYER.

AFTER all that has been said, it seems almost superfluous to ask whether Fr. John Baptist was a man of prayer. Because, having seen in him a man utterly dead to the world, and to every earthly affection, who hated and macerated his body in a manner so unusual, who entirely devoted and sacrificed himself to his work for the greater glory of God, who found in everything an opportunity for the exercise of virtue, who, in short, cared for nothing but heavenly things, we must necessarily conclude that his soul was gifted with abundance of celestial light and heavenly affections while he conversed with God in prayer.

His contemporaries testified that he had received a very high gift of prayer, insomuch that the thought of God was never absent from his mind, while every object and circumstance served to draw him anew to his heavenly Father, and still further to influence his heart with love of the Supreme Good. Once free from Community duties, he immediately withdrew to the most solitary place he could find, that he might give full vent to the burden of affection which usually oppressed him; nor would he have ceased to remain there had not obedience and charity called him elsewhere.

And what of the gift of tears which almost always accompanied his prayer? The memorials tell us that his converse with God was unceasing, and so seldom without tears that they became, so to speak, his daily bread. Before all other testimony we must draw first upon that of our holy Founder, who said: "Fr. John Baptist weeps incessantly, and sometimes I see him turn his head lest I should take notice of it." From a manuscript left us by Signora Lucia Constantini, at that time our benefactress in Corneto, we learn that when, during a mission given there, he stayed at her house, the Father never slept in bed, but would seat himself on a prayer-desk, supporting his head on a pillow, which she found every morning wet with the tears he had shed during the night.

It is not difficult to arrive at the cause of this continual sighing and weeping. We may find it not only in the compunction which penetrated his heart at the sight of his own spiritual miseries,

but in the many evils of this world and the innumerable offences of men against the infinite majesty of God. He sighed and wept over the troubles of holy Church, and those of the Congregation now coming into existence. His love for the Supreme Good was another cause of these tears; and here again we are assisted by the testimony of our holy Founder, who, when asked to explain his brother's gift of prayer, replied that it consisted in intimate recollection in God, and loving union with the Divine Majesty; that as he prayed, Fr. John Baptist broke forth into loud and deep cries in the Divine Presence, in burning desires and lively longings that God's name might be glorified. Another time, discoursing on his brother's intimate union with the Supreme Good, the Saint affirmed that one day as Fr. John Baptist was praying in the Chapel of St. Michael the Archangel, in the Church of the Presentation on Monte Argentaro, he was seen rapt in sweet ecstasy, lifted several palms above the ground. And of similiar facts we should probably have had to record many, if the careful watchfulness of God's servant in hiding them had not prevented it, together with the reserve of his saintly brother in repeating them.

Nevertheless, we may add to what has been said concerning his spirit of prayer, by quoting some memoranda which have come down to us as if to reveal him in spite of himself. "Prayer," he says in one place, "ought never to be neglected by the Religious, who, when he feels the impulse, ought to make it wherever he may happen to be: we have an example of this in King

Ezechias who made it in bed; in King Manasses who prayed in prison; in Susannah who did the same before all the people; and in S. Scolastica who conversed with God while at table." "In prayer," he writes elsewhere, "one must call out loudly to God, not with mere voice sounds, but by the force of our prayers, which cry out in the first place from the depth of anxiety; secondly, from the extremity of the need for which we are praying; thirdly, from the liveliness of the confidence and affection with which we pray; and these cries obtain from God that which we desire."

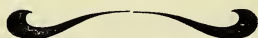
He also noted how holy Scripture teaches that prayer accompanied by groans and tears is very acceptable to God, so much so that to them we owe it that our prayers are granted. So said the angel to Tobias: *Quando orabas cum lacrymis... exaudita est oratio tua*—When thou didst pray with tears, thy prayer was heard. God likewise said to Ezechias: *Vidi lacrymas tuas*, etc.; and of our Lord Jesus Christ it is written that he was heard because *Oravit cum clamore valido et lacrymis*—He prayed with a loud voice and with tears. Finally, the eyes of the Spouse in the Canticles are compared to the fountains of Esebon, to signify that the tears which pressed out by holy thoughts and fervent affections, ought to gush from the eyes of a soul that converses with God.

We must not imagine, however, that Fr. John Baptist made the spirit of prayer to consist in those sensibilites of which he had a particular gift. Indeed, he taught that the soul ought to walk in pure faith, despoiled of all sensible graces, and that this is the safest and noblest way. "That

firm faith which prays in tears is," he says, "to be desired: but in weeping at prayer one seeks nothing else than to leave one's sighs in the hands of God." And these brief extracts explain to us that while the good Father found all his delight in continual conversation and union with God, he was steadily actuated by one simple desire, namely, to gather from this sacred communion practical fruit in the exercise of heroic virtues, as he himself has already recounted.

We may end this chapter by recording that together with his other spiritual gifts, the good Father possessed that of sometimes foreseeing future events. For the above-mentioned Signora Lucia Constantini attests that not being able, as she had desired, to enter the religious life, she prayed our Lord that she might have a daughter in order to consecrate her to God in her stead. Her petition, however, remained unanswered. One day, in conversation with Fr. John Baptist, she mentioned her wish to him, begging him to pray for its fulfilment. The servant of God at once replied: "Do not doubt: you will be the mother of many sons and daughters." Signora Lucia hearing these words, thought that the Father was joking, and not inclined to take her seriously. After some time, therefore, she repeated her request, though more earnestly, and the Father made the same reply. Finally, still believing that he was making fun of her, she begged him to obtain from God the grace to liberate her from so many disquieting thoughts, whereupon in a moment her mind was freed from all trouble and anxiety. In the course of time

she came to understand that the sons and daughters he had promised her, should be her children according to the spirit. And in after years, when the Retreat for the Religious and the Monastery for the Nuns were founded at Corneto, Signora Constantini was more than a mother in the loving care and assistance she extended to both Communities. Another proof of Fr. John Baptist's gift of foreseeing the future is given us in the prophecy he made concerning his approaching death, of which we will speak in the following chapter.



CHAPTER XIII.

HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

GOD is wont in His loving providence not rarely to discover and manifest to His dear friends secrets concerning matters which they have much at heart, so that, prepared in time, they may meet adversity with greater humility and resignation. Thus He acted in His dealings with our holy Father and Founder. Knowing how great was the love, how close the union, not only of relationship, but of charity which existed between him and his brother John Baptist, and how painful for that reason their total separation would prove, He was pleased to prepare him for it by a heavenly warning. St. Paul of the Cross was celebrating the divine sacrifice one July morning in 1765, when he suddenly heard an interior voice

which said to him: "Prepare thyself for a great affliction." By no means given to lend an easy belief to revelations, the holy man paid little or no attention to the warning. Next morning, however, the same voice repeated the same words; and it was then that he understood the mystery, saying at once to himself: "This without doubt means the death of Fr. John Baptist." How grieved Paul was at the announcement, the reader can well imagine. However, he resigned himself, and from that day forward disposed himself devoutly to kiss the hand from which the blow would fall.

The time of expectation was not very long. In a few days Fr. John Baptist was suddenly struck down by a fever which being light was not much noticed; all the less because after keeping his room for a little, the sick man regained some degree of strength. Nevertheless, Paul did not cease to repeat: "Fr. John Baptist is dying, and I know what I say, you will see."

And in fact it happened that on St. Martha's day, the 29th of the month, our good Father, after saying Mass, again fell ill with the fever, and lost strength so quickly that he himself saw that for him the last hour was now nigh. A Religious going one day to see him, noticed that the Father was engaged in deep thought, while he often made with his first finger the sign which means "No." Anxious to know the reason, he asked Fr. John Baptist what he meant. "I mean," replied the sick man "that this time I shall not get better." "That is merely an apprehension of yours," answered the Religious, "the fever is very

slight." "You will see," added the servant of God, "you will see." "But there are others in the house much worse than you," continued the Religious. "That does not matter," said Fr. John Baptist, abruptly, ending the conversation, "all will be cured, and I shall go." That these words were not spoken by chance, the future showed; for, while all the other Religious were cured, he took his way to Paradise.

Firm in this persuasion, the servant of God busied himself as days went by, in preparing for his passage to eternity. One day his holy brother, also tormented by his usual pains, came to visit him, when, in answer to his inquiry as to how he felt, Fr. John Baptist replied, in the words of Judas Macchabæus: *Si appropriavit tempus nostrum, moriamur fortiter*—If our time has come, we will die bravely. To which our holy Founder added: "And let us trust in the divine goodness; that at the end we may always have served our good God."

And in truth, in the midst of his bodily pains, Fr. John Baptist displayed that peace and serenity of spirit which is characteristic of the faithful soul sighing for a speedy union with God. His sole occupation and anxiety was to make affectionate aspirations, expressing his faith, his love for the Supreme Good; or his grief for his sins, and resignation to the divine will. Above all, he had often on his lips stanzas of the *Dies Iræ*, which he always repeated with tears in his eyes. So, during the night, when he remained alone with the infirmarian, he would often turn to him and say: "Brother Bartholomew, repeat good acts towards

God." His cell being very near the choir, he greatly enjoyed hearing the Religious recite the office of Matins, and once in a voice full of joy, he said to the infirmarian: "O what a pleasure it gives me to hear the divine praises!" But afterwards, fearing that he had fallen into an act of vanity, he suddenly added: "In another, this would have been a good sign."

Truly admirable was his subjection to the good Brother, whose every suggestion in the smallest and most indifferent things, the good Father forced himself to obey, even at the cost of pain: only in the matter of modesty was he tenacious, even to the last, ever scrupulous in his love for that angelic virtue.

In the meantime, our holy Founder's health had somewhat improved, and he was able the better to help his sick brother. Very often was he at the bedside, to console and encourage the patient or to hear his confession: while on his part Fr. John Baptist manifested his affection and gratitude in offering to the Saint wise suggestions for the government of the Congregation, and for the greater perfection of his soul, and in advising him as to the choice of a confessor after death had separated them. It is worthy of mention that Fr. John Baptist, in reply to his holy brother's frequent questionings as to whether his conscience was in any way troubled, answered with invariable tranquillity: *Sto quietissimo*—I am perfectly calm. Recommending himself one day to the prayers of the dying man, St. Paul of the Cross said: "Father John Baptist, remember me in Paradise. You know in the midst of what

woes and tribulations you are leaving me." "Very well," was the reply, "I shall do so willingly, and I promise to keep you ever in my memory." Who is there that does not see in these facts a verification of the promise made by the Holy Spirit when He said: *Sperat justus in morte sua* — The just man has hope in his death.

It was the vigil of our Lord's Transfiguration, and the good Father, contemplating the mystery, exclaimed: "O how willingly would I go tomorrow to assist at the glorious festival of my Jesus!" But his hour was not yet come, and it was only after the feast of the Assumption that his state became worse. Aware of his condition, Fr. John Baptist asked for the last Sacraments which he received with unspeakable devotion and fervor, assisted by the prayers, not only of the Community, but also by those of the numerous good persons who had known him and were aware of the state of his health. Hearing of their concern, the good Father was moved to repeat the words of the great St. Martin, Bishop of Tours: "Lord, I am ready to employ myself for Thy greater glory, whenever it may please Thee."

But it pleased God, instead, to call him to Himself, to crown his virtues and merits. On August 27, after blessing his holy brother and all the Religious of the Congregation for the last time, he lost the power of speech, entering into his agony, in which he remained till the 30th of the same month. This fell on Friday, the day dedicated in a particular manner to the memory of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, of whom the servant of God had been so faithful a disciple.

It seemed as though our most loving Redeemer had delayed until this day Fr. John Baptist's departure from this world that He might render him in this way conformable to Himself, even in death. Evening was already setting, and all the Religious prayed and wept round his bed, together with our holy Founder, his brother. Fr. John Baptist, impelled at the last moment by extraordinary fervor, intoned the beautiful anthem to the Blessed Virgin: *Dio ti Salvi o Regina*. And while the others continued the hymn, God's servant breathed forth his soul into the hands of the Creator, at the age of 70 years and almost five months, leaving his memory in benediction by all, and especially by our Congregation, which in him justly recognizes a second father.



CHAPTER XIV.

HIS BURIAL; AND THE MARVELS WHICH HAPPENED AFTERWARDS.

THE blow inflicted on the Congregation by the death of Fr. John Baptist was naturally felt, most of all, by our holy Founder, who in him lost a brother, with whom all his life had been passed, who had shared all the labors and fatigues he had undergone in the course of so many years of apostolic labors and in the foundation of our Institute. He remained with dry eyes until the good Father's last breath, when, overcome by the

vehemence of his grief, he was obliged at length to give vent to natural feeling, and render his beloved brother the innocent tribute of copious tears. Although he himself watched by the body in prayer during the whole night, at an early hour in the morning, worn out as he was with grief and fatigue, he was ready to follow it to the Church, where the Community were about to celebrate the funeral rites. Nor was this all. He believed himself able, that he might give further token of his affection, to act as celebrant both at the Office of the Dead and at the Solemn Mass. The effort, however, cost him dear. He had undertaken to say the Lessons of the third nocturn: but when he arrived at the words *Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei*, his voice became so choked with sobs that he was unable to proceed. The same thing happened when he was obliged to pronounce the name of the deceased in the proper prayer of the Mass. When all was over, he confessed that he would not advise anyone to run similar risks on such occasions; and that he himself would not have done so a second time.

Meanwhile, the death of God's servant becoming generally known, devout persons, especially from the neighboring town of Vetralla, came up to the Retreat in such numbers that it was necessary to set a guard round the body. In the evening, it was decided to bury it; and it is known that the notary public attended with the necessary witnesses for an authentic identification of the remains, which were put into a wooden coffin together with a short but well expressed eulogy of

the virtues of the servant of God, written on parchment and attested with the seals of the Congregation, and those of the notary and municipality of Vetralla, who in this manner wished to give perpetual testimony to their affection and reverence for him whom they looked upon as the founder of the Retreat of S. Angelo, which stands in their territory.

The coffin was buried in the ordinary place of interment, but somewhat apart, and over it was set a slab of marble inscribed with the name of Fr. John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel. The place is now used as a Sacristy from which one may enter the very room inhabited by the man of God for so many years. We have unfortunately to lament that there remain to-day no traces which might reveal the precise spot in which this precious treasure is preserved. At the time of French revolution of 1793, which 'spread throughout Italy, bringing with it the suppression of the Religious houses, it happened that in order to secure the safety of the remains, they were exhumed and hidden elsewhere. This, it appears, was done secretly, and in the general disorder of the times the matter seems to have been forgotten. Until now it has been impossible to find any record or indication of the place to which the coffin was transferred.

Leaving, therefore, to God's providence the time and moment in which it may please Him to glorify His servant on this earth, we will now add some of the facts recorded in the notes, which serve to confirm the good odor of sanctity which he left after him both in life and in death.

Mother Mary Magdalen of St. Joseph, a nun of great virtue and merit, at that time prioress of the Monastery in Vetralla, was thinking about Fr. John Baptist on the evening of his death, when he suddenly appeared to her, surrounded by glory and giving her his blessing, appeared to fly upwards to heaven. The same happened to another Religious in this Monastery, who had a special devotion to this good Father. To her, again, as she was in prayer, our Lord revealed the immense glory with which He had rewarded His faithful servant.

A similiar apparition was made to another devout person of great merit, to whom the servant of God showed himself several times, revealing to her that this grace had been granted her in recompense for her lively faith, ardent charity, and profound humility; and on one occasion he bade her tell his brother, Paul of the Cross, to be of good cheer, because our Lord had enriched him with much glory.

More remarkable still was the apparition which occurred to Fr. Bernadine of St. Ann, one of our Religious, who, compelled by obedience, narrated the fact in a letter addressed to a Superior who lived in the Retreat of SS. John and Paul in Rome, where at the same time our holy Founder was in residence. He writes as follows: "Notwithstanding my great disinclination, I at once obey your command. I do this also for the consolation of our beloved Father Paul of the Cross, who will understand everything better than I can explain. I tell you, then, briefly and simply, that, when I was at the Retreat of Mon-

tecavo, I was full of perplexity and fear on account of the displeasure I felt because I had not remained at the Retreat of S. Angelo. One night, before Matins. I awoke and could not sleep again; and as I was uncertain whether the hour to go to choir had passed, I sat on my bed until the clock should strike. All at once I was seized with a great shaking and trembling in the whole of my body, as if my soul were about to depart: then I saw my cell illuminated in every corner by a bright light, and, in the midst of this, our blessed Fr. John Baptist, wearing the religious habit as in life. Trembling as I was, I immediately threw myself at his feet, face to the ground, and without being able to raise my forehead, I saw the whole figure of him who stood looking at me with a face loving indeed, but grave, as though reproving me. He said that I ought to make no account of the matters which were disturbing me, and that I must never withdraw myself from any obedience, even though I had to pass through the carnage of a thousand swords: and this also out of regard for that beloved old man, (Father Paul.) that after so many afflictions and difficulties he might finish in peace the few days that remained to him. When I had resolved to do as he suggested, he showed me as though in a mirror,—I cannot explain myself better,—the effect of his powerful advocacy for the advantage and progress of the Congregation and the assistance of our Father, infinitely greater than that which he gave him during his lifetime. *Postea evanuit*, leaving me in great consolation, insomuch that for several months I was hardly aware of the observances I

kept with the Community. This apparition has remained so impressed upon my memory and heart that it seems impossible that I can ever forget it."

We will mention finally, that God failed not to reveal the state of this soul to his blessed brother, as we learn from the priest who became his spiritual director after the death of Fr. John Baptist. This Religious writes that Paul, by light received from on high, was assured that Fr. John Baptist was already happy in the bosom of God. The revelation occurred as the Saint was meditating on the text *Regem cui omnia vivunt*, when his eyes were privileged to behold the ineffable bliss which surrounded the brother he had so greatly loved. Whereupon, his face all radiant with joy, he began to exclaim: "Fr. John Baptist is not dead; no, he is not dead, but lives in God." And in this assurance he remained for the rest of his life.

But besides these revelations God was pleased to manifest the merits of Fr. John Baptist by means of graces obtained through his intercession. A certain Julia Angelini, of Toscanella, (a town a few miles distant from Vetralla,) who was one night seized with a burning fever accompanied by a distressing vertigo, remembering that she possessed a small piece of the habit of Fr. John Baptist, recommended herself to him. Scarcely had she finished her prayer, when she fell asleep, to rise next morning perfectly cured.

A physician of Bieda, in the Province of Viterbo, related that his son, having swallowed in water a few threads of the habit of Fr. John

Baptist, was freed from an obstinate quartan fever, which had tormented him for more than a month.

In the town of Ronciglione, in the same Province, Signora Francesca Venni, after giving birth to a little girl, found herself at the point of death. She also was cured, after placing in her mouth small pieces of objects which had belonged to the holy man. Nor was this all. Some time afterwards, taken with interior pains, she began little by little to lose the use of her senses. Obligated once more to have recourse to her benefactor, she put a small piece of his habit in water, and having swallowed it, she soon recovered the use of her faculties, and was never afterward troubled in a similiar manner.

A poor man in the district of Bieda, had the misfortune to be wounded in the right arm by an arquebuse, and as the limb was broken and its muscles severely lacerated, he lost all hope of ever being able to return to his work. He continued, day and night, to suffer terrible pains, until a devout lady brought him a small strip cut from the habit of Fr. John Baptist, and persuaded him that if he would have faith in that saintly man, he would assuredly obtain some grace from him. The invalid gratefully embraced the suggestion, and was immediately freed from all pain; and a little later a piece of bone became detached from the arm. Finally, while his friends had given up all expectation of his being able to resume work, he was gradually restored to perfect health, and was able, before long, to return to his labors in the fields.

As a final instance of the cures wrought through the intercession of Fr. John Baptist, we may recall the fact that our holy Founder, after his brother's death, was accustomed to bless the sick who came to him with a relic of Fr. John Baptist. And we know that many of them, through its agency, obtained the grace of health. It is related that the lady superior of the Conservatorio of S. Onofrio, in Rome, who suffered from a dangerous tumor on her breast, begged our holy Founder to come and bless her. The Saint went at once, and giving her his blessing with the relic, ordered the tumor to arrest its progress. Wonderful to relate, the dangerous growth was stopped, and from that moment ceased to cause her pain. Another time our holy Father was called to the assistance of a lady who had been brought to death's door by an obstinate colic, he repaired to her house, carrying with him the relic; and after the patient had received his blessing, she, to her great consolation, felt herself free from all pain.

Let us now end these memorials of Fr. John Baptist, with the hope that God may one day render His servant glorious also here on earth. Meanwhile, may his virtues and his example be an ever greater spur to fervent souls to run the way of perfection and sanctity.





Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH, EARLY EDUCATION AND YOUTHFUL
FERVOR; MAKEES THE ACQUAINTANCE
OF OUR HOLY FATHER, AND
PROGRESSES IN VIRTUE.

FATHER Fulgentius was born in the district of Pereta in the Tuscan diocese of Soana. His father, Gian Giacomo, and his mother, Angela Pastorelli, were God-fearing people of moderate position and fortune. The child first saw the light on June 17, 1710, and received in holy baptism the name of Fulgentius. The care and attention with which he was brought up by his pious parents, and how, from his early childhood, he had been fed with the milk of God's holy fear, and educated in the solid principles of Christian virtue were made evident in the events of riper years.

Almost as soon as he began to grow up, his parents, rejoicing to see in him a docile and peaceful disposition, inclined to good, decided to set him to study, in the hope that he might one day do honor to his family and good to his neighbor; and in truth the lad did not belie this early promise. In the desire of his parents he recognized the will of God and his own good; whereupon, he applied himself with such fervor to carry out their intentions as to foreshadow results of no common order. His devotion and piety, moreover, never seemed to cool, thus demonstrating how, from the first, he had been sustained by the blessings of divine grace, which convinced him of the truth of the Apostle's maxim that knowledge is worthless without piety, which alone renders it fruitful in every sense of the word. Contemporary witnesses have left us written evidence that from the time of his assuming the clerical dress (he was then about twelve years old) Fulgentius began to show a particular inclination to remain quietly at home, where he passed his time exclusively in study and prayer; and when he went out to get the air, he always carried a book which he read as he walked with an attention and recollection which edified all who met him.

His modest bearing soon gained for him the esteem and affection of the neighborhood, especially of the parish priest, who availed himself of the lad to keep order in the Church, and prepare everything for the services, in the fulfilment of which office he showed himself attentive, punctual and very obedient. No less edifying was his behaviour at home; so that his father, expressing

his satisfaction in seeing his son always docile, obedient, devout and resigned in everything that he was told to do, would often exclaim: "My Fulgentius—although I ought not to say so—has a nature of gold." In a word, the young cleric was the angel of the household, an example to others of his age, and the edification of the country side. It was plainly evident, indeed, that by God's grace, his future would be of no ordinary kind.

As he persevered in his studies, he daily gave fresh proofs by his piety and virtue, of the truth of his call to the ecclesiastical state, when he had arrived at the proper age, his name was inscribed on the roll of the clergy in the diocese of Monsignor Cristoforo Palmieri, who in due time promoted him to holy Orders. It was at this time, when he was about twenty-one years of age, he had occasion to know and to hear St. Paul of the Cross, who in 1731 was giving his first missions in the diocese of Soano, with what zeal and fruit is well known to all.

The effect produced in young Fulgentius by the Saint's voice has been described to us by our holy Founder himself, who was accustomed to relate how, when he was giving missions near Pereta, the cleric Fulgentius came to hear him in company with his schoolmaster, Pievano, a man of great merit. - The first time they met was on the morning of the general Communion, when Fulgentius, as he listened to the *ferverino* which it is usual to preach on such occasions, became so penetrated by the Saint's ardor, that he there and then resolved to give himself entirely to God. His deep gratitude for the grace thus received, he

himself recorded in his reply, many years later, to a Religious of the Monastery of Piombino, who had recommended him to take every possible care for the restoration of our holy Founder's health. "Our Father," he writes, "is now in Orbetello to cure his fever, and I hope that to-morrow evening he will return to the Retreat. I assure you that, although in me there is not a vestige of charity, I shall, nevertheless, leave nothing undone for the restoration of his health, if only to discharge my obligation to him who was the instrument used by God thirteen years ago to draw me from the abyss of iniquity, into which I had fallen, owing to my want of correspondence with divine grace."

The fact was, however, that his change of life consisted only in giving himself with greater fervor to the practice of holy virtue and to the acquirement of the most sublime perfection. He began to rise at midnight to pray, to use the discipline frequently, to avoid all conversation except about spiritual things, preserving always a bearing so modest and composed, as to convince everyone that his heart, entirely occupied with heavenly things, sought God alone.



CHAPTER II.

ORDAINED PRIEST: PROGRESS IN PERFECTION,
AND ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

THE Bishop, hearing of these excellent dispositions, thought it unnecessary to delay the promotion of Fulgentius to the priesthood. The young man was only twenty-three years old, but the necessary dispensation was easily obtained from the Holy See by the bishop, who himself conferred upon him the order of priesthood, to the great satisfaction of all who knew the virtues of Fulgentius. What we already know of the tenor of his life, enables us to form some idea of the fervor with which he prepared himself for this holy order, and the perfect dispositions in which he received it. The parish priest, who was also his tutor and spiritual adviser, was able to attest that from the time he celebrated his first Mass, he observed in his pupil such composure and exactitude in all the ceremonies and rubrics that from that time he had no further need of assistance. But, if we wish to arrive at an accurate opinion as to the spirit which animated him when he mounted the steps to the altar, we may gather it from a letter addressed some years later to the Religious at Piombino, already mentioned, in which he says: "I do not think that this can reach you before the feast of *Corpus Domini*; but, should you receive it during the octave, do me the charity to pray most particularly to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in order that He may

pardon the temerity with which on that most solemn day I consecrated His body and precious blood, and that He may also forgive me the many irreverences committed in the celebration of the Holy Mass during eleven continuous years." Such words as these tell us clearly enough to what degree he was penetrated by the sublimity of the ministry, and how well prepared he was by humility to draw from it the results for which it was instituted.

It is, in truth, no easy matter to describe the alacrity with which he gave himself to acquire the perfection proper to the priestly state. Penetrated with the truth that the priest is a representative of Christ on earth, he devoted himself more than ever to study this divine model, so that he might, as far as possible, reproduce it in himself, until he became persuaded, like the Apostle, that he must express in his own body the mortification of the Redeemer. From his boyhood his inclination had been towards a life serious and retired, far removed from the enjoyments lawful and proper to that age; but from this time his fervor impelled him to heroism, so that, as his contemporaries declared, the rigor of his mortification equalled that attributed to the Anchorites. He ate very little, scarcely enough to sustain him: he used the discipline continually, and was always girded with small iron chains and hair shirts. He hungered for prayer and converse with God, and from his abundant weeping, it appeared that our Lord had granted him the gift of tears in a very high degree.

But let no one imagine that, anxious as he

was to sanctify himself, Fulgentius was unmindful of that important duty inherent in the priestly character of securing the santification of his neighbor; on the contrary, no sooner was he ordained than he began to put it in practice. And as he reflected how best to fulfil it, he reminded himself that the poor people in the country who had the greatest need of instruction were precisely those who were the least able to procure it for themselves. He therefore hesitated no longer, but with the knowledge and approval of Padre Pievano, he undertook to celebrate the Mass at daybreak so as to secure an opportunity, in some cases, perhaps, the only one available, for the instruction of these poor people. The plan was quite successful; and it is related that with a true understanding of their wants, the fervent priest zealously adapted his words to their capacity, explaining Christian doctrine and the Catechism with such unction of spirit and vivid speech, that his hearers were not only edified, but gathered unspeakable fruit from his words.

The parish priest, recognizing in these first examples, the gift with which God had endowed his youthful colleague, saw at once the benefit thus placed within the reach of other members of his flock, and lost no time in setting him to catechise the people in this district and teach Christian doctrine to the children. The zealous priest accepted all this work which he discharged with wonderful wisdom and efficacy, to the great satisfaction of the people, who saw in him a worthy minister of the sanctuary and an honor to his birthplace.

But just as true zeal resembles fire which the more material it finds so much the more does it advance and spread, so Fulgentius was not content to see himself limited solely to the scattering the seed of the divine word. Desirous to help still further the souls of the people, he got himself approved for hearing confessions, which opened to him a field sufficiently vast to satisfy his holy desires. On festivals, after celebrating Mass and giving the usual instruction, he spent the rest of the day in the confessional, to which the people flocked in great numbers to open their consciences. In the same way, he hastened wherever he knew there were sick people to be comforted and exhorted to patience, and in the case of the dying, his ardor redoubled in giving them the assistance of the Church's rites to dispose them to take the step from time to eternity. What harvest the zealous priest gathered from these arduous labors we may learn from the spirit of charity and divine love which animated his words; for he was not of those whom the Divine Master said that they teach, but do not themselves practise what they teach, but he was of those fortunate evangelical laborers who can say with the Apostle: "Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ."



CHAPTER III.

HIS VOCATION TO THE CONGREGATION, AND HOW
HE ASSUMED THE HABIT.

AS HAS been said, Fulgentius, while still a young cleric, influenced by his preaching and manner of life, contracted a spiritual friendship with St. Paul of the Cross. It is not known whether, during the time which elapsed between that meeting—which happened in 1731—and the period of which we are speaking, 1735, there was any correspondence between them, though it seems very probable. There appears to be no doubt, however, that the young priest often went to Monte Argentaro to visit our holy Founder, and confer with him on matters concerning his soul. A fact which he himself afterwards related goes to prove it. The first time he visited the two servants of God in the hermitage of St. Anthony, it happened that after giving him a very cordial welcome, they set some beans to cook for their common refreshment. But while the beans were cooking, they began to speak of God and of His heavenly kingdom, and became so taken up with the sweetness of these topics, that they forgot the fire and the beans, so that when the moment came for tasting them they found them all burned, and were consequently obliged to go to bed almost fasting. The anecdote, at any rate, serves to illustrate the fervor and the spirit of prayer of our first fathers, and to assure us that Fulgentius

went sometimes to visit them before finally joining their Institute.

This step was not long deferred, and the occasion which determined it may be briefly related. The two brothers who were evangelizing the neighboring dioceses in 1735, came also to Pereta to give a mission; and, as may be imagined, Fulgentius was among those who did their utmost to secure its success. Now, because on the one hand the words which fell from the lips of the two fervent preachers were all fire, while on the other the spirit of the young priest was well disposed to still greater fervor, his heart became so inflamed that he could no longer delay that resolution which he had been probably contemplating for some time. Dazzled by the light of those truths which he had heard explained with such vivid force, nothing else was necessary to persuade him of the vanity of earthly things and the infinite value of those of heaven, and to make him resolve to bid farewell to the world, to fly from it, and to secure the salvation of his soul in a solitude where he would live for Jesus Christ alone.

He seems to have discussed the matter with our holy Father, who does not appear to have advised a sudden flight; nevertheless this method was finally adopted by Fulgentius as the best way of avoiding possible opposition on the part of friends and relations. When, therefore, the day for the departure of the two missionaries drew near, he arranged to leave by another road; and matters turned out as he wished, for, unseen by anyone, he met them at a given spot, whence

with great content he journeyed in their company to Monte Argentaro.

Arrived at the goal of his desires, the fervent priest wished to be clothed as soon as possible with the holy habit of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Neither the precise day nor the circumstances of his clothing are known to us, but from the height of his virtue and the depth of divine love which burned in his heart we can well imagine what extraordinary effects were produced in him by this change of outward attire. And here we must not omit to state that everything seems to point to the fact that Fulgentius was the second companion of our holy Founder. Previous to his arrival, others, it is true, had been received as subjects of the new Institute, but they were only wandering stars, who, overcome by the difficulties of the austere life, had returned to the world. Fulgentius, on the contrary, was always firm and persevering in the resolution he had taken; and he himself, in a letter to the above-mentioned nun of Piombino, says that he was the first to be drawn by our Lord to the nascent Congregation.

And as he was among the first and faithful companions of our holy Father to put on the habit of the Passion of Jesus Christ, so, likewise, was he foremost in imitating his virtues. The notes do not enter into the details of the heroic acts practised by these servants of God in the poor hermitage of St. Anthony; but all who have read the life of our holy Father know that it is no exaggeration to assert that their life was heavenly rather than earthly, more angelic than human, as has been said elsewhere. We learn, however, that

Fulgentius, conformably to the spirit of the Institute, would often go down into Orbatello and Portercole, or Santo Stefano, to catechise and help the poor inhabitants with sacramental confession, as our holy Founder and his brother Fr. John Baptist were in the habit of doing. These expeditions cost them dear, because each one of the said districts were five or more miles distant from the hermitage, and both in summer and in winter they made the journey barefoot and with heads uncovered. In addition to this exercise, which occupied them on festival days, Fulgentius sometimes accompanied our holy Founder on his missions. On these occasions he usually gave the catechism, and such was his sweet and peaceful nature, the lucidity and easiness of his method, and the fire of divine love which animated him, that his words produced a wonderful effect among the audience.

On this head, our Religious who had lived with him, and had received from him the first milk of religious instruction, have left us certain information: "It was our lot," writes one of them, "when God called us to put on the holy habit of the Passion of Jesus Christ, to make our general confession to Fr. Fulgentius, and we can testify that he had an admirable manner in exercising this holy ministry. insomuch that he seemed to have received from God a particular gift for it. We can speak in the same way of his preaching, having heard him so many times, we came to recognize in it a certain virtue and efficacy by which his words reached the heart and encouraged to the practice of the doctrines he taught."

CHAPTER IV.

HIS CONSTANCY IN ENCOUNTERING THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH IMPEDED THE NEW INSTITUTE:

HE MAKES HIS PROFESSION.

IN this same year the building of the Retreat of the Presentation of our Lady, on the farm of St. Anthony was resumed, conformably to the plan which some time before God had indicated to our holy Father. War had caused the suspension of the work for a time, but at last it was possible to continue it. And here, although we have said something of the matter in our memorials of Fr. John Baptist, we must record the fervor of the first fathers who dwelt in the hermitage of St. Anthony. Early in the morning, after making their mental prayer and celebrating holy Mass, they went down to the building site, and at once lent a hand in carrying stones, lime and other materials for the building. Thus they continued to work all day, until in the evening they returned all together to the hermitage, which was distant fully a mile and a half, to dispose themselves to repeat the same labors the following day. In this way the building was quickly finished, so that in 1737 the religious were able, to their great joy, to occupy it.

However, since God often sends great trials upon His work, He permitted that at the very time appointed for taking possession of the new Retreat and Church, hell was let loose and obstacles were put in the way of this holy undertaking. Perhaps for this reason and also to obtain

approval for the Rules, our holy Father went that winter to Rome, with Fr. Fulgentius as companion. Let us remember the conditions under which the journey was made: they were obliged to walk about a hundred miles to reach Rome, and as many on their return; the season was as its coldest, and the roads almost impassible, deserted and without the convenience of inns; add to this the fact that they went absolutely barefoot, clad in a simple tunic, without cloak or head covering of any kind.

Anyone can form an idea of the sufferings which these two servants of God had to undergo, and especially Fr. Fulgentius who was of a slight and delicate constitution. From their own lips it was known that their feet were swollen and bleeding, to such a degree that when they arrived in Rome and were obliged to ascend the staircases of the palaces for their audiences with prelates and dignitaries, they left traces of blood as they walked. It must be confessed that the virtue of Fr. Fulgentius was on this occasion put to very severe proof. But he stood firm, bravely imitating the example of his beloved Founder and Father. He himself recounted how one night they were obliged to seek shelter and sleep in a stable, where he experienced unspeakable joy, because our Lord consoled him with a special revelation concerning the sufferings of the child Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem. From which we learn that although only a recruit, he was already a veteran; his years of religious life were few, and yet he was so advanced in virtue that he might be said to have reached that degree of which

the holy Spouse speaks in the Canticles, that is to say, the love which is as strong as death.

But if it be true, on the one hand, that the divine goodness is accustomed to begin and accompany the work done for its greater glory with many trials in the shape of obstacles and sufferings, for the express purpose of establishing them all the more firmly and to mark them out as works of God's hand, it is none the less certain that afterwards God is accustomed to reward the instrument He has used and bring them safely through to the light, heaping consolations upon them. Such was His conduct with our first fathers. After having tried their humility, patience and constancy for five years in succession, God finally gave the happiness, on September 14, 1737, of seeing their first Church blessed and used for divine worship under the title of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mary in the Temple: and four years later, that is to say, on May 15, 1741, when the Rules of the Congregation were approved by Pope Benedict XIV, their desires were fully satisfied.

The reader may imagine the fervor with which, on the reception of this joyful news, they prepared themselves to make their holy vows and to unite themselves still more closely to our Lord by means of the bonds of the religious profession. For this function they fixed upon the 11th day of June of the same year, 1741, the day dedicated to the memory of the glorious Apostle St. Barnabas; and then, retaining the name received in holy baptism, they laid aside forever their surnames, in place of which they took one with some holy

association. Fr. Fulgentius, then, dropping his family name of Pastorelli, called himself Fulgentius of Jesus, as though in token of that which he wished to become, a true imitator of the divine virtue of Jesus Crucified.

And an occasion for testifying his love of suffering very soon presented itself. Having started one spring day on his way to bless the grain of certain benefactors of the Congregation, he met a drove of horses. Suddenly one of the animals, as though instigated by the devil, separating himself from the rest, attacked Fr. Fulgentius with such fury and madness that, not content with throwing him face downwards on the ground, he began to trample upon him, hurting him horribly, and especially his back and loins. It seemed as though the poor Religious must die, and he confessed afterwards that he recommended his soul to God in the belief that he was about to expire. But God did not permit it. The enraged beast having vented his rage, finally left him and went away. Then the suffering man, more dead than alive, made his way as best he could towards Orbetello, where he was attended to by the doctor. The injuries he had received necessitated long and careful nursing, but it was vain to expect from Fr. Fulgentius a long stay in the town for the sole purpose of taking care of his health, the Religious who sighed continually for solitude, and whose very last thought was given to his body. Hardly had he somewhat recovered than he returned to the Retreat, heedless of the prayers and warnings of his friends and benefactors.

CHAPTER V.

ELECTED MASTER OF NOVICES: AND THEN
RECTOR OF THE RETREAT OF THE
PRESENTATION.

FROM this time forward his delicate health became less and less satisfactory; in fact the rest of his life may be said to have been a continual martyrdom, as will appear from that we shall afterwards relate. Notwithstanding this bodily infirmity, however, his contemporaries noticed that his virtues, from this time, always increased in solidity, until his conduct became as a mirror in which was reflected the image of Jesus Crucified. Nor did our fathers fail to make use of it to the advantage of the Congregation. It became necessary, as soon as the Rules were approved by the Holy See, to establish a regular novitiate, and consequently to choose a director and master of novices for those who came to assume the holy habit. There was little hesitation about the choice: from the first our holy Founder had seen in Fr. Fulgentius the person most fitted for the office, by reason of his amiable, meek and prudent nature, united as it was to great depth of virtue and heavenly gifts. As soon, therefore, as the necessary arrangements could be made, Fr. Fulgentius, to the general satisfaction, was chosen Master of Novices.

With what feelings he undertook this responsibility may be gathered from a letter which he wrote at that time to the Religious of Piombino already mentioned: "Pray the divine mercy,"

he writes, "to succor me with the help of grace, that I may be really converted once for all; because until now I have been good for nothing but to exercise the patience of our holy Father, who, nevertheless, out of his great charity, puts up with me, and looks upon me with particular affection; although he relies too much on me, leaving me in his absence to serve all the Retreat. having given me the responsibility of continually assisting the novices and the religious; which has more than once made me wish to die, that I might not be an impediment to their spiritual progress. Do me the charity to pray our Lord, if it be for His greater glory, to take me hence, that I may not scandalize these good brothers by my bad behaviour."

To understand the import of this letter, it must be remembered that before the brief of Benedict XIV approving the Rules, our holy Founder had governed the Retreat of the Presentation, with the title of Rector, although he was occupied at the same time with the establishment of the Congregation and in giving missions, almost without interval, in company with his brother, Fr. John Baptist; and it fell, therefore, to the lot of Fr. Fulgentius to supply his place in the management of the Retreat. It would therefore, not be far from the truth to say that he was almost always at the helm of the little vessel which was then beginning to take the seas, namely, the budding Institute of the Passion.

This provisionial arrangement became permanent after the approval of the Rules. At the first General Chapter, held in canonical form, our

holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, was elected General of the Congregation, and on the same occasion, Fr. Fulgentius was chosen for the Rectorship of the Retreat of the Presentation, retaining at the same time the direction of the novices; which two offices—except for three years passed at the Retreat of S. Eutizio, for the sake of his health—he filled for the rest of his life, with what spiritual profit to the whole Institute is well known.

That the reader may better understand with what dispositions of soul he was supported, under this double responsibility, we will quote some sentences from his letters to the Religious of Piombino. In the year 1746, this nun complained to Fr. Fulgentius that the office of Abbess had been thrust upon her, and Fr. Fulgentius answered: "*Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus*;" thus must we say, Very Reverend Mother, after raising our minds and hearts to heaven, since we are both in the same boat and have the same charge. Father Paul having been elected General of the Congregation, these Religious have substituted me in his place, and have elected me—I blush to say it—Rector of this Retreat. But what must we do? Lose heart? No, rather must we distrust ourselves altogether; put our whole faith in God, confident that He who has imposed this burden upon us, will give us grace to carry it. He is able to use His creatures in any way He pleases. We are weak instruments; but God, with His almighty hand, can make use of us to do great things; and we, knowing our insufficiency, shall have no reason to attribute the least good to

ourselves, but refer all glory to Him who has a right to it, that is, to the supreme operator of all good, while we shall remain convinced of our wretchedness, of our nothingness, of our sin."

In another letter addressed to the same correspondent, he writes: "It is true that I have a great desire to see everyone perfect in his observance of the holy Rules, and I succeed in this; but what is the use of it, if I myself have not the true spirit of observance? And wherefore I beg our Lord either to give me the true spirit of my vocation, with the gift of holy perseverance, or to let me die; because, although our Lord in His mercy has given me the resolve to give my life first for the holy Catholic faith and then for the Congregation, nevertheless, experience tells me that I cannot trust myself, even a little, so great is my frailty."

Such words as these were dictated by his profound humility; but in reality his conduct was a true example of every virtue, so that what was said of the precursor of Christ might justly be applied to him: *Erat lucerna ardens, et lucerns*. In a word, according to the meaning of his name Fulgentius, he was within, all on fire with the love of God, and at the same time, outwardly, resplendent by the good example with which he fulfilled all the duties of a perfect superior, as will be better demonstrated by that which we are about to say.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS METHOD OF RULE AND EXEMPLARY CONDUCT.

BEFORE alluding to the circumstances of his last illness and death, it will perhaps not be unacceptable to the reader if we give some more detailed particulars of the virtues of this servant of God, and we will do so in this chapter as well as the scarcity of available documents will permit.

Let us preface what we have to say about his method of government by recalling his conviction that the spirit of Jesus Christ is the spirit of sweetness and benignity, and that things done for His love are more lasting and durable than others. His first care, therefore, was to instil into his subjects and pupils the love of observance and the spirit of the Congregation with all possible gentleness. This system he carried out not only with the elder and professed religious, but also with the young plants confided to him in the novitiate. His first solicitude was to instil into their hearts from the earliest days the solid and fundamental maxims of the most important virtues, that is to say, of profound humility, exact obedience, and of perpetual mortification and self-abnegation; of unwearied exercise of prayer and recourse to God, and above all, the right and pure intention which ought to accompany every action, even the least important. All this he taught them with great sweetness and gentle persuasion, well knowing the risk entailed, otherwise, of producing a com-

pliance merely external, the result of human respect.

It must not be supposed, however, that he let matters take their course too easily. When he became aware that anyone was abusing his kindness and meekness, or that it was necessary to rouse anyone from negligence, he well knew how to make himself heard. Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer relates that he once corrected a novice in a voice so loud that everyone trembled who heard him. It happened, another time, that a professed cleric, who had asked leave to speak with two friends from his native place, stayed talking to them longer than was necessary. The watchful Father waited until the evening when the cleric accused himself of his fault in the refectory. "And you," he said with all seriousness, "for this evening can do without eating, for you have been well fed with gossip" — a correction which the said cleric, as he afterwards confessed, remembered all his life.

A young novice who was good and full of promise, but very lively, said several times that he would like very much to see the town of Orbetello. His master, not unwilling to give him this little pleasure, took him one day to the town, where he had reason to go to consult the doctor. On their arrival, however, in order that he might get the better of such temptations for the future, Fr. Fulgentius ordered that as the people came out of the Church of the nuns, he should kneel before the door and recommend himself to the prayers of every one who passed. The young man obeyed, but with what shame and blushing

may be easily imagined. The experience did him good, and from that time he was free from such temptations.

But with the exception of similar cases in which his delicate conscience obliged him to use somewhat rigorous expedients—and these were very rare, because all esteemed him and obeyed him as a saint—his ordinary behaviour and his government were modeled upon the kindness, meekness, and charity of the divine Master, Jesus. Whoever approached Fr. Fulgentius and talked with him, always found him equable, always in the same humor, content and cheerful under all circumstances, meek and peaceful with every one he met; so that his contemporaries used to say that he seemed not to have sinned in Adam, and that, in a certain sense, he was not subject to ordinary passions. If he had to give advice or instruction, it was done with all good grace, if he had to give orders, he seemed to beg rather than command; when obliged to blame, he did so without the shadow of anger; and if sometimes he thought it expedient to show some feeling in order to arouse the negligent and careless, he showed plainly enough that his anger was not from within, and that while he was making war on imperfection, he was doing so for the good of the imperfect. Thus it was that, tempering firmness with suavity, he always attained the object for which his corrections were given, and at the same time increased his hold upon the hearts of the religious.

By way of illustrating what has just been said, we may here quote a passage of a letter

written by him to a newly elected Superioress, exhorting her to the reform of her relaxed monastery: "Your Reverence should take courage to do what is demanded by your obligation, and God will be with you. Say with St. Paul: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*. The cause is God's. He will protect you, and bring you to a happy realization of your intentions. Begin little by little to raise the standard of regular observance, taking care to act with firmness, and not to be discouraged or wearied by difficulties. At the same time, couple your resolution with sweetness and gentleness both in word and in deed. You must lead your subjects by the way of love rather than of fear. Our Lord will give efficacy to the words and holy exhortations with which you will win the minds and hearts of the Religious, and make them understand that what you say and do is for God's glory alone, for the good of their souls and in fulfilment of the duties of your office. Begin by removing the most conspicuous abuses, those which chiefly stand in the way of observance, and disturb peace and recollection. See that all give themselves to the exercise of prayer, from which your Reverence and the Religious will receive holy lights to guide you along the path of perfection, and reform yourselves entirely according to the spirit of the Rule, while your hearts will become inflamed with the love of God, which renders sweet and easy everything which is hard and difficult. You must not expect to succeed in everything at once, but only by degrees, one thing after another, and thus in the end you will, by God's grace, obtain all."

In this letter Fr. Fulgentius really describes his own method of government. So much we might readily assume in any case, because he was accustomed to practise what he recommended and exacted from others. On account of the pain in his breast from which he suffered, it fatigued him greatly to speak or write much; but never on that account was he at all backward in fulfilling his duties as Superior and Master of Novices. He never omitted the conferences and instructions customary with us, he wrote letters, and scrupulously fulfilled every other duty proper to his office, and this, be it noted, without disgust, complaint or difficulty. And although as a rule he was oppressed with innumerable domestic worries, he was always ready and quick to attend to everyone with the greatest alacrity. His cell was ever open to any who might wish to speak to him, by day or by night; and he did his best to satisfy everyone, without considering his own convenience or comfort.

When, after spending some time at the Retreat of St. Eutizio for the sake of his health, he was recalled to Monte Argentaro to resume the office of Novice Master, he said to a Religious who was his companion during part of the journey: "I know very well that I am going to sacrifice myself, but since holy obedience and the will of God require it, I go willingly and contented." It is known that he had asked of God that He would permit him to suffer during the night, but leave him free during the day that he might be able to work. The prayer was granted, for although he certainly suffered during the day, he was still able

to discharge his official duties; but with the approach of night he was assailed by pains and spasms which not only prevented sleep, but rest of any kind, insomuch that unable to lie down, he merely sat on his bed.

Under such circumstances, he might certainly have dispensed himself from attendance in choir; instead of which he was there before all the rest. During the night office, which it is our custom to recite standing, he would sometimes feel himself about to fall or faint; but he had learned to cheat his own weakness, taking courage and putting off his departure from nocturn to nocturn, and so persevering until the end of the office.

He once gave expression to the satisfaction which victories of this kind afforded him in these words: "When during spiritual exercises I experience greater dryness and weariness in the inferior part of my soul, I am exceedingly content, because I am certain that then self-love has gained nothing and that I act solely to please God and to do His most holy will."

In fact, it may be asserted that to Fr. Fulgentius, after our holy Founder, the Congregation lies under the greatest obligation, since it was by him that our first Religious were imbued with that spirit which ought to be its chief characteristic; and at the same time it is equally true to say that the successful issue of the Congregation from the difficulties which stood in the way of its foundation is in great part due to him. As it is natural to suppose, the minds of the Religious were often subject to fear, discouragement and perplexity. Fr. Fulgentius was always at his

post to steady them, to instil confidence in God, to encourage all to unity and obedience. "Let us be united among ourselves," he would say, "let us preserve charity and concord, and nothing from without will be able to hurt us." A Religious who was his novice relates how in 1764, an infectious malady laid low eleven out of twelve of his subjects then in the novitiate at Monte Argentaro. It was Fr. Fulgentius who encouraged them all to meet this trouble with resignation, and when the feast of the Holy Cross came around he strove to encourage them by saying: "Cheer up, my children, because the Holy Cross finds us all ready to embrace it."



CHAPTER VII.

HIS EXTRAORDINARY MORTIFICATION.

FROM what has been said the reader may glean some idea of the consolation which Fr. Fulgentius gave to the Community by his method of government, as well as of the fruit which resulted from it; while his example was a continual stimulus to the practice of those virtues with which he strove to imbue others.

To say something now as to his mortification, it will be remembered that, after the accident which befel him when he was trampled upon by a horse, his health, which had always been delicate, became much weaker. Nevertheless, from this time his mortification was truly extraordinary.

Although previously he had been remarkably sparing in the matter of eating, for the rest of his life he drank only water, and took no salt with his food, of which he ate so small a quantity that anyone might have supposed him to have lost all sense of taste.

It happened more than once that the Religious whose duty it was to prepare the table, forgot to set the water bottle in its place, where Fr. Fulgentius could reach it. But the servant of God appeared not to have noticed the omission and left the Refectory without drinking. The Brother, when afterwards he became aware of his neglect, went at once to beg pardon for his carelessness, but instead of blaming him, Fr. Fulgentius said gently, "Do not trouble; it does not matter." On leaving Orbetello, where he was obliged to undergo treatment for the injuries received from the vicious horse, a benefactor offered him two eggs, which, when he reached home, he gave to the lay Brother to prepare for him. This Brother—God permitting—forgot to cook and serve them. Fr. Fulgentius made no reference to the matter, nor did he think to enquire to what use they had been put. He once told how, when returning from a mission with our holy Father, they were both overcome by a burning thirst; after walking a long time they came to a fountain at which they were about to drink, when our holy Founder, turning to Fr. Fulgentius, said: "And would it not be better if we now performed an act of mortification for the love of Jesus Christ?" There was no need to say more in order to induce abstinence in one who was already so inclined to mor-

tification, and the water remained untasted by either of the travellers.

Fr. John Baptist of St. Ignatius attests that when, as a novice, he was set to sweep Fr. Fulgentius' cell, he used to find traces of blood which he had expectorated; nevertheless, the Father was always cheerful and contented, as though nothing had happened; no complaint ever fell from his lips, nor any word that was not full of resignation. The pain which he suffered was exceedingly severe, especially at night when, as has been said, he was obliged to remain seated on his bed, often without being able to close his eyes. Fr. Anthony of Calvary, one of our Religious, relates that one day as he was clipping Fr. Fulgentius' beard, he handled the scissors so carelessly as to cut out a piece of his upper lip. The wound remained long unhealed and bled freely every time the Father took food. But neither at the time of the accident, nor subsequently, did he make it the occasion of displeasure or resentment; and whenever Fr. Anthony expressed his regret, he would always reply: "But it is nothing."

From these few facts related by authentic witnesses, we see to what a height of perfection Fr. Fulgentius had risen in this virtue. Whatever occasion of suffering presented itself, he was always the same imperturbable, indifferent, as if nothing extraordinary or painful had happened to him. Moreover, his readiness to suffer was such that he made little of the austerities proper to the life he had embraced, or of the infirmities which tried him so sorely; it was plain from his actions that he sought out occasions of suffering and was

almost scrupulous if he at any time imagined that he had allowed some opportunity of mortifying himself to pass unheeded.

When, for example, he went outside the Retreat for some necessity or ministerial duty, it was impossible to induce him to walk a little on the highway. "It is not fitting," he would say, "that the Religious of the Passion should be seen walking on the public roads."

Nor was he ever observed on any occasion to manifest the smallest desire to know the news of the world, or to look at beautiful or rare objects, or to give himself the least indulgence however lawful. Wherever he might be, he walked with eyes cast down and with a bearing so modest and reserved that all who saw him were stirred to devotion. He took pleasure in silence, and when there was occasion to speak, he did so in a voice so low and humble that often he scarcely made himself heard. In a word, he may be said to have been a true picture of Jesus Christ our Lord.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY.

A SIMILIAR resemblance to Jesus Christ appears in Fr. Fulgentius when we consider his humility. It was enough to notice his demeanor, his mode of life, his sentiments and his manner of expressing them, to be convinced of the low es-

teem in which he held himself and wished to be held by others. Although God had enriched him with so many fine qualities and extraordinary gifts, he was so far from making them the occasion of vainglory, that on the contrary he used them as a means of self humiliation. The good actions which he continually performed were, in his own eyes, as nothing; and because he feared that others might set some store by them and honor him accordingly, he was extremely careful to keep them hidden from everyone. Thus, when he spoke, he was always on his guard lest anything should fall from his lips which might redound to his own praise; and if sometimes by inadvertence or for the edification of others, he had said anything about himself, as soon as he became conscious of it, he took himself severely to task, humbling himself for his pride. For the same reason, perhaps, he often spoke in praise of others. Most willingly, too, did he subject himself to anyone who might be appointed his superior. In the latter years of his life, when Fr. Francis Anthony of the Crucified—who had formerly been his novice—was elected Rector of the Retreat of the Presentation, the servant of God readily accepted the charge of giving him possession. He made a fervent address to the Community, on this occasion, in which he urged them to render to the new Superior a sincere and filial obedience, and ended by saying that for his part, he was ready to give it, because he felt himself truly disposed to obey anyone, even a lay-Brother, who might be appointed his superior.

That these words came from his heart, he

proved one day, when Fr. Francis Anthony, in the fulness of his veneration for Fr. Fulgentius, advanced to the middle of the refectory to accuse himself of his faults. As soon as he saw this, the servant of God said, with great recollection: "I am, it is true, very proud, but not to the extent of blaming my Superior." His brother once wrote to him asking him to let him know whether he might come to the Retreat to see him. As Master of Novices and former Rector of the Retreat, he might certainly have risked inviting his brother; nevertheless the servant of God, who, when it was a question of submission, was as simple as a child, answered his brother: "I will do whatever Fr. Rector may decide, as I am in all things and for all things ruled by his commands; when you find it necessary to come up here, refer the matter to him, and he will appoint that which he knows to be to the greater glory of God."

The following fact may serve as a final proof of the humility which filled the heart of Fr. Fulgentius. During one of his visits to Monte Argentaro, our holy Father, following his usual custom, sought to abase and humble himself that he might give full vent to the low opinion he had of himself. One evening, accordingly, while Fr. Fulgentius was at recreation with his novices, our holy Father entered with a heavy chain around his neck, and kneeling before Fr. Fulgentius and all the novices, he began with fast flowing tears to humble himself, declaring that he was a useless, incapable man, who had never done any good. Then, well understanding as he did, the humility of Fr. Fulgentius, and in order that the novices

might the better esteem him and value still more his holy teachings, he began to say many things in his praise, telling how greatly in particular he had worked and suffered for the Congregation, and how truly he deserved to be listened to and imitated. Hearing this, the humble servant of God, Fr. Fulgentius, covered with confusion and casting himself, mentally, into the abyss of his own nothingness, threw himself on his knees, and with tears began to disprove the praises showered upon him by the Saint, accusing himself of his defects, and endeavoring to surpass our holy Father by abasing himself yet more. The good novices, as may be imagined, were amazed and overcome at the sight of such a contest between their two superiors whose virtues they thus learned to rate even more highly than before.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS DETACHMENT, AND LOVE OF GOD.

FROM this poor estimate which Fr. Fulgentius had of himself, we may easily gather the small importance he attached to exterior and earthly things. In his opinion anything was good enough and sufficient for him, and under all circumstances he invariably adored and blessed the divine decrees. Writing, in 1746, he said to a person who had his confidence: "I have been condemned by the charity of the Chapter of our

Religious—who might be my masters in the way of perfection—to remain in Orbetello, that my illness may be cured. Humanly speaking, recovery does not seem possible, nor do I desire it; may God do what pleases Him.”

To his brother who once manifested to Fr. Fulgentius his sorrow at the death of his wife, he replied: “Believe me, there is no better way of preserving tranquillity of heart amid the tempest of the stormy sea of this deceiving world, than to acknowledge the divine will in every event, in every adversity, in every misfortune. At this point you must stop, abandon yourself into God’s hands, and say: ‘God has willed it so; he is Master: be it all for His love.’ Oh! if you knew what hidden treasure of merit is shut up in this sole act of perfect resignation to the will of God, and to suffer all things for His love. I hope you will make it.”

When once he knew God’s will in his regard, he abandoned himself to it as one dead; no obstacle, no sacrifice of any kind could restrain him, much less induce him to go back. The nun at Piombino—his letters to whom have been already quoted—appears to have been reluctant to accept the office of Superior. To her he accordingly wrote: “I feel for you, because now for many years I have served this Retreat in the double charge of Master of Novices and Superior of all the Religious, in matters both temporal and spiritual. But if God, by means of Superiors, wills it so, why should I wish it otherwise.”

During his term of office as Superior, he very often found himself in critical circumstances for

want of means; but never on this account did he lose courage or confidence. "Let us be fervent," he would say to his subjects, "let us be observant, let us love and serve God faithfully, and let us not fear that what is needful will be wanting."

The reader, after what has been said, will not doubt Fr. Fulgentius' love for the Congregation nor his ardent desires for its foundation. Nevertheless, when obstacles arose in its way, in the shape of contradictions or persecutions, he used to say: "We must not seek or desire anything but God's greater glory. If I imagined that the Congregation was not to continue to promote the better service of God, I myself would be the first to take a hammer and level the walls of our Retreats with the ground."

We will only add, to crown what has been said before, how the fervor which filled his heart increased so greatly that, jealous though he was in hiding it from the eyes of men, he did not always succeed in preventing their observing it. Fr. John Baptist of St. Ignatius, who, during his year of novitiate, served his mass nearly every morning, testifies that there was something angelic in the recollection with which he celebrated the holy sacrifice; and he noticed, in particular, when he arranged the chalice for him after the ablutions, that its foot, where Fr. Fulgentius' hand had rested, remained hot in a very appreciable degree, even in the cold of winter.

Whoever saw him after he had celebrated mass, recognized in him the soul of whom the Spouse in the Canticles speaks, when she says: *Inveni quem diligit anima mea*, so recollected was

he, and so completely immersed in prayer. At such moments it was useless to ask to speak with him; he would simply send some other Religious in his place. Nor did this state of recollection leave him even when he was absent from the Church or Choir. No matter where he was or what he did, the mere sight of him convinced the beholder that he walked unceasingly in the divine presence, in continual colloquy with God.

Of this interior disposition we have further proof in certain expressions which occur in his letters. Writing to a nun he says: "Pray God to grant me either death or love." And in another letter: "Love the Supreme Good, infinitely lovable, and love Him also for me, cold as I am in the love of God who is all love towards me." But the truth was that far from being cold—or frozen as he put it, in his profound humility—he might have boasted with the Apostle that he had reached that degree of love for God in which he no longer lived by his own life, but by that of Jesus Christ.



CHAPTER X.

HIS LAST ILLNESS; HIS HOLY DEATH; AND THE
PRODIGES WHICH FOLLOWED.

JUST as a statue when it has been brought to perfection is transferred to the gallery for which it was made, so the souls of the just after

they have been well exercised by Divine Providence on this earth, and have acquired that degree of virtue which renders them fit to enjoy the celestial mansion prepared for them, are transferred by God to heaven by means of a happy passage from this life.

During the Lent of 1755, Fr. Fulgentius, now ripe for heaven, suffered from a tumor under the ear, and to secure the required medical attention it was necessary for him to go down from Monte Argentaro to Orbetello. With the arrival of Holy Week, however, notwithstanding the urgent solicitations of his hosts, who begged him to remain with them, he decided to return to the Retreat, there to take part with his brethren for the last time in the ceremonies of Easter. But when the festival was over, the Religious, seeing that the illness which afflicted him was evidently growing worse, begged him to return to Orbetello in order to continue the cure. How this advice was taken by the good Father it is needless to say; for to every remedy that could be proposed, he preferred to remain apart from men that he might converse alone with God. But the Religious, urged by charity, met together and decided to command him to go under obedience. At the word "obedience" the servant of God humbly bent his head, recognizing in the order the expression of the divine will, and immediately prepared himself to return to the town.

Before setting out he said to a priest in whom he had particular confidence: "Now that I know it to be God's will that I should go to Orbetello, I am content, because I know that they will give

me fire, and thus I shall have occasion to suffer something for my Jesus, for love of whom I have suffered hitherto nothing." In fact, immediately on his arrival at the house of Signora Maria Grazi, where he was accustomed to stay, the so-called *fuoco morto*—dead fire—was applied, causing the patient terrible suffering. Fr. Fulgentius bore it with invincible courage, although, as it turned out, quite uselessly; for the operation was followed by fever and jaundice, while the pain in his breast grew rapidly worse.

It became evident that his condition was critical, and he himself was not slow to perceive that his end was near. He therefore wished to make his confession and to receive the Holy Viaticum. Two of our lay-Brothers, who, after a journey, were returning to the monastery, having heard on the way that Fr. Fulgentius, their beloved Superior, was lying ill in Orbetello, visited him that they might receive his last blessing. He welcomed them with the greatest kindness, and as they took leave, he bade them tell the Religious not to give themselves the trouble of coming to Orbetello to fetch his body, but only to await to receive it from the boat at the foot of Monte Argentaro; and he added that at his funeral only two candles should be lighted on the altar, as he wished to be treated like a poor man.

Meantime, as his illness increased, he earnestly begged for Extreme Unction, which he received with every sign of humility and the deepest devotion. He afterwards sent for his hostess, Signora Maria Giovanna Grazi, to whom he said: "What is your name? Maria, Giovanna, Caterina,

is it not? Well, then, imitate the Most Holy Mary and St. John who followed Jesus and bore him faithful company on Calvary; imitate also St. Catherine of Sienna by making a little cell in your heart that you may converse there with God alone."

On the following day, as his condition continued to get worse, those about him called the Prior of the Collegiate Church, who read the recommendation of a departing soul, and gave him the benediction *in articulo mortis*, as well as the blessing of the Holy Rosary and of Mt. Carmel. At last, four hours before noon, the good Father, opening his eyes, which appeared bright and shining like stars, breathed forth his blessed soul into the arms of his Creator, at the age of forty-four years and ten months, twenty of which he had spent in the Congregation, worn out with fatigue, emaciated by austerities, rich in virtue, and full of merit.

The news of this precious death made great stir in the town. The principal inhabitants, especially the General in command, did their best to retain the body in Orbetello, but the Religious were firm in maintaining their rights, which in the end were acknowledged on condition that the remains should be buried in a place apart, and, as it were, provisionally. The bier was accompanied to the seashore by all the clergy, secular and regular, as well as by all the Confraternities and a crowd of people, everyone acclaiming the deceased as a saint, and striving to cut off some portion of his habit to keep as a relic. Our Religious were in waiting at the port with the Confraternity

“della Misericordia.” Here the body was placed in a boat, devout psalms being recited as appointed by the Ritual. It was afterwards borne to the Retreat on Monte Argentaro.

Its arrival was marked by a wonderful incident. It was noticed, as soon as the procession reached the walls of the Retreat, that the body which in consequence of the jaundice had remained pale and yellow, became suddenly white and beautiful, to the admiration of all beholders. It was noticed, besides, that it was still flexible as in life. Moreover, a Brother having cut one of the veins of an arm, blood was seen to flow forth, although thirty hours had passed since death had taken place. After the funeral ceremonies and suffrages prescribed by our holy Rules, the body was placed in a coffin with a metal tube containing a brief account of the life of the deceased, written on parchment. It was then buried near the rails of the high altar, amid the tears and devotion of those who in Fr. Fulgentius had lost a beloved and affectionate father and master.

But the loss was felt most of all by our holy Founder, to whom the news was brought at Corneto where he was staying with the family of Signor Constantini, benefactors of our Institute. “O God,” he exclaimed, on hearing it, “we have lost a great man, a pillar of our young Congregation; Fr. Fulgentius was a great saint.” And so saying, he burst into tears. St. Paul of the Cross was almost always overcome in the same manner whenever he visited Monte Argentaro; and on one occasion, having to recite the usual suffrages for the dead, at the formal opening of his visitation,

he could not refrain from exclaiming: "Ah! dear Fr. Fulgentius, why did you leave us so soon? Why did you not wait for us?" Nor can it be said that such words were prompted by a simple natural feeling, since we know that even during the lifetime of Fr. Fulgentius, the Saint always spoke of him with the greatest esteem. His letters to the Father, a few of which have been preserved, sufficiently demonstrate our holy Founder's high opinion of his virtues. Eye-witnesses, too, have left it on record, that when he spoke of him, the Saint would lift his beretta in sign of respect, saying as he did so: "Fr. Fulgentius is a saint."



CHAPTER XI.

HIS SUPERNATURAL GIFTS DURING LIFE: GRACES
OBTAINED BY HIS INTERCESSION AFTER DEATH.

WE will bring this sketch of Fr. Fulgentius to a close by mentioning certain facts which prove that he was endowed with those gifts known as *gratiae gratis datae*, which served to confirm the sanctity with which he was credited. All those who had experience of it, attest that in his direction of souls Fr. Fulgentius was so truly admirable that everyone was persuaded that he possessed the gift of discernment of spirits. Well did he know how to guide each of his penitents according to the particular impulse or attraction by

which the Holy Spirit was leading him, to say nothing of the wonderful unction with which he attracted those who spoke to him about matters of conscience.

Furthermore, he seems to have had the gift of prophecy; because he foretold to several Religious that the illness from which he suffered would be his last. It is also related that a certain novice named Eutizio being taken ill, it was the general opinion that he would not recover. "But no," said the servant of God one day addressing him, "it will not fall to you to die and to be the first to raise the flag for Paradise." Signor Giorgio Francesco Lancer, of Orbetello, who happened to be present, at once asked: "Who then, will be the first to carry that flag?" "His companion who came with him," was the Father's reply. The companion referred to was Brother Turrennio of the Most Holy Trinity, a native of Soriano. who, although at that time was in perfect health, shortly afterwards was seized with sickness and died. The first Religious removed by death from the Congregation, he fulfilled Fr. Fulgentius' prediction that he would raise the flag for heaven.

After his precious death, our Lord deigned to show how acceptable Fr. Fulgentius was to Him, by granting graces at his intercession. Of this it is sufficient to mention two or three instances. A certain Maddalena Rossi, who lived at Pereta, the native place of the servant of God, was one day seized with pains in the head which were so severe that she could not even bear to hear the sound of footsteps in the house. Her sister, Fran-

cesca secretly placed upon her head a portion of the clothing which the servant of God had worn during life. In a moment the patient started up and said: "What did you put on my head? It seemed to me as if a flame of fire had just gone out of it." And immediately the pain left her and caused her no further trouble.

The same Maddalena Rossi and her sister, on another occasion, had suffered for several months from tertian fever, against which all remedies had been tried in vain. Their mother, who was cousin to Fr. Fulgentius, determined to visit his burial place on Monte Argentario, that through his intercession she might obtain her daughters' recovery. She accordingly went to the Retreat and having prayed before the grave with great devotion, she placed upon it a bottle of water which she took home with her. Her confidence was rewarded, for, having given the water to her daughters to drink, she had the satisfaction of seeing both of them instantly cured.

It is related also that Sister Mary Lucia Maddalena, a religious in the Monastery of Toscanella, being very ill with pains in her side and other complaints, took in her hands, before going to sleep, the Crucifix which Fr. Fulgentius had been accustomed to carry, and rose the next morning free from all pain and in perfect health.

Enough has been said to convince the reader of the holiness which distinguished the life of Fr. Fulgentius. Twenty-one years after his death it was still further demonstrated, when on the occasion of some necessary repairs to the pavement of the Church on Monte Argentario, his re-

mains were exposed to view by order of Father Provincial. They were seen to be incorrupt and unharmed; only at that moment, it seemed, dissolution was about to begin, water flowing copiously from the body, but without any unpleasant smell. When the coffin was replaced, a tablet of white marble was set over it with a simple inscription which will tell future generations of his dear and blessed memory, and incite them to imitate his example.





Fr. Marcus Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTHPLACE, YOUTH AND VOCATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD, AND AFTERWARDS TO THE
CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE.

THE third pillar chosen by Divine Providence to support the nascent Congregation of the Passion was Fr. Marcus Aurelius of the Most Holy Sacrament. He was born at Nice on September 27, 1693, of devout and honest parents, Giorgio Pastorelli and Luisa Raimondi. His early childhood was spent under the roof of an aunt who sent him to one of the public schools, where at that time the principles of religion were taught no less than those of science. The boy, who was intelligent and endowed with a good memory, had already given evidence that he had studied to some purpose, when an incident occurred which threatened ill for the realization of the hopes

which had been founded upon his progress in learning. It happened that an army of Germans and Piedmontese passed through the city on their way to fight in Provence, and the spirited boy, unable to resist the attractions of military glory, determined to enlist in one of the regiments led by the Duke of Savoy, notwithstanding the prayers and persuasions of his good aunt. He was sixteen years of age when for the first time he faced the vicissitudes of war, in the course of which he eventually found himself once more in Nice, where, however, he managed to avoid being recognized by his relatives.

But God, who had turned upon him the eyes of His mercy, enlightened him after five years, at the end of which time, writing from Piedmont he asked the pardon of his family for his disobedience. Receiving a favorable reply, he immediately returned, and once more, in 1714, set foot in the house of his aunt to the great joy of his friends. He showed the sincerity of his repentance by resuming his neglected studies with all possible vigor, giving himself at the same time to prayer and devotion with so much ardor that his subsequent adoption of clerical dress occasioned little surprise. The bishop, made aware of his excellent dispositions, did not hesitate to give him the tonsure and minor orders.

From this time Fr. Marcus Aurelius began to live at Ceva, in the house of his maternal uncle, who was archpriest of the Collegiate Church in that town, and such was the favorable impression made upon this good priest by the virtues of his nephew that he chose him as heir to the whole of

his rich patrimony. Thus provided for, and becoming day by day more assured of his vocation, the young cleric decided to dedicate himself more closely to God by receiving holy Orders. The bishop of Nice conferred upon him the sub-diaconate March 13, 1717, and two years later ordained him deacon. His elevation to the priesthood took place during the following year at the hands of the bishop of Mondovi.

The hopes which his uncle had formed of him were fully realized when after his ordination he called upon him to assist him in the care of souls, a duty which his rare gifts enabled him to discharge so perfectly that he quickly won the esteem and affection of the people. Some years later his uncle, now advanced in years, renounced his benefice in favor of his zealous assistant.

About this time, however, Marcus Aurelius began to feel himself drawn to give himself to a life of greater perfection and to find a place where he could put his ideas into practice. One day the arrival of Fr. Domenico Boriglioni, of the Congregation of Christian Doctrine, who had been invited by his uncle to preach, gave him an opportunity to manifest his desires of which he was not slow to avail himself. He opened his mind and conscience to the excellent Religious, who, although he had no reason to dissuade him from his purpose, prudently advised him to take time to reflect, and to recommend the matter to God in prayer.

Soon after the return of Fr. Boriglioni to his college in Sospello, Marcus Aurelius resolved to acquaint his uncle with his intention to seek ad-

mission to the Congregation of Christian Doctrine. The venerable priest, who had set all his hopes on his nephew, was not a little disturbed on hearing of this resolution, from which, however, neither prayers, arguments nor threats availed to turn him. On the vigil of St. Bartholomew he fled secretly, and made his way to Sospello, where, presenting himself to Fr. Boriglioni, the Rector, he begged admission to the Institute.



CHAPTER II.

HIS LIFE IN THE CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

THE qualities of the new postulant were sufficiently well known to render unnecessary any hesitation on the part of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine in admitting him to their Congregation. At the end of his year's probation in the college at Sospello, he was set to teach, first grammar, then rhetoric, and finally, theology, while at the same time he exercised the ministry of preaching, to the great advantage of souls.

In 1729 he was called by his superiors to Rome, to fill the office of Novice Master and to deliver the sermons of the "Bona Mors" which at that time were preached every Friday in the Church of S. Maria in Monticelli. His growth in the science of the saints and his progress in virtue were abundantly illustrated during his residence

in the Eternal City. It happened one day that all the Fathers in the house were assembled in Chapter to deliberate as to the reception of a novice, when suddenly one of them began to blame the Master of Novices very sharply on account of the manner in which he took his young disciples to visit the seven Churches. The Fathers, as a body, were much displeased at this untimely reproof, and some of them spoke in his defence: Fr. Marcus Aurelius himself, however, betrayed no sign of resentment but simply maintained a respectful silence.

His confessor, Fr. Borgovini, relates that one day, in order to overcome his extreme care in the matter of cleanliness, he put on a worn-out garment which had been laid aside by one of the community, without noticing that the person who had worn it was afflicted with a malady which produces disgusting insects, great was his astonishment when he saw the effects of his want of caution. He began at once to use every possible effort to get rid of them, but in vain, until at length he was overcome by shame and sadness. Seeing the uselessness of all human means, he betook himself to prayer, hoping in that way to obtain the victory over himself and resignation under this heavy cross. After two years passed in this manner, he went to his confessor one morning and said joyfully that at last God had granted him the grace of resignation, and that he felt himself ready to carry this cross until death. Fr. Borgovini, pleased though he was at his penitent's victory, bade him persevere in his prayers for deliverance from the malady. Fr. Marcus

Aurelius, thinking that his confessor spoke thus out of compassion, replied that it was no longer necessary, since he felt himself perfectly resigned. But as Fr. Borgovini insisted that he must obey for the greater good of his neighbor, to whose service he had dedicated himself, he consented, and made for this purpose, a novena to St. Teresa, to whom he had a great devotion. His faith and obedience did not go unrewarded, for at the end of the novena, the good Father found himself free from his trouble and in perfect health.

The same confessor made trial of his penitent's virtue in another direction with equal success. He had noticed that Fr. Marcus Aurelius was over attached to certain books of which he made much use in preparing his sermons, drawing from them a good deal of material which was thought to be above the heads of his hearers. Fr. Borgovini, accordingly, ordered him to banish the said books from his room and to limit himself to the works of Granata, and occasionally those of St. John Chrysostom. Fr. Marcus Aurelius religiously obeyed the order, not, however, without extreme repugnance, but very greatly to his profit as he afterwards confessed, and as the following incident serves to illustrate.

The Father who was appointed to succeed him in preaching the "Bona Mors" sermons, because he imagined that his discourses were less attractive than those of Fr. Marcus Aurelius, allowed himself, on that account, to fall into depression and then into some degree of envy; and as will sometimes happen out of human frailty, he went so far as to play a disagreeable joke on his sup-

posed rival. One day, when the hour for the sermon was very near, he went to the Father Rector and complaining that he was too indisposed to go into the pulpit, suggested that Fr. Marcus Aurelius should preach in his place. The latter, however, was not a little perturbed at the prospect of preaching without preparation, which was altogether contrary to his usual custom. Having asked of his superior a moment's respite, he ran to ask advice of his confessor, who suggested that he should answer the Father Rector in this manner: "If you leave me any choice in this matter, I neither can nor ought to preach; but if you command me I will do so." His confessor added, moreover, that if the Rector ordered him to preach, the result would prove God's intention, viz: if the sermon should be a success, the preacher would have no motive for vain-glory, because it would have been the work of God; if, on the other hand, the sermon proved a failure, it would be a sign that God wished to mortify him and put him to shame. The good Father finally ascended the pulpit in obedience to the Rector's desire, and spoke so well as to excite the wonder of those who heard him.

To his other offices it would seem that he added that of assistant parish priest at the above-mentioned Church of S. Maria in Monticelli. It is certain, in any case, that in 1738 he was elected Rector of the College of S. Martino, near Viterbo, an office which he filled with great fruit by means of confessions he heard and sermons he preached in the neighborhood. In 1740 the fatigues consequent on these apostolic labors brought him to

death's door. We know from Fr. Borgovini, whose advice he continued to seek, although they were no longer members of the same Community, that on this occasion Fr. Marcus Aurelius, being in doubt whether he ought to ask of God the grace of recovery or that of death, felt himself inspired to abandon himself totally to the Divine will; upon which he suddenly regained his health. Nor did the grace end here, for being afterwards troubled by a cough accompanied by much weakness, it happened that on the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, he was impelled to rise and celebrate Mass, which he had been obliged to discontinue for some time. Not only was he able to offer the holy Sacrifice, but from that moment he suffered neither from cough nor from any trouble of the kind.



CHAPTER III.

GOD CALLS HIM TO OUR CONGREGATION:

HE TAKES THE HABIT.

HAVING regained his health, Fr. Marcus Aurelius was transferred by his superiors to the college of Civita Vecchia, where he did much good by his apostolic ministrations. It happened just at this time that our holy Founder and his brother Fr. John Baptist went to Civita Vecchia to give a mission, and Fr. Marcus Aurelius who, amongst others, went to hear them, was much impressed by the zeal which they threw into their

sermons and instructions. For some time past he had longed to acquire greater perfection by means of penitential exercises, and with the advent of these two holy preachers it seemed to him that the moment had arrived to respond to the call which he felt within him to adopt a new tenor of life.

He first sought the advice of men experienced in the direction of souls, who all approved his intention; then, shortly afterwards, he went to Fr. John Baptist and acquainted him with his determination. The Father, perhaps to try the sincerity of his vocation, dissuaded him on account of his age and delicate appearance, and in fact gave him little hope of being received into the Congregation whose austerities, he said, would certainly be beyond his strength.

But such was the fervor of the postulant that far from being cast down at this repulse, he had recourse to our holy Founder, who gave him a more encouraging reception, advising him to recommend the matter to God. On the other hand, we have it from the Saint himself that he had been greatly struck, on the occasion of the public opening of the mission, with the modest and recollected demeanor of this young priest, whom he had noticed among the crowd present; so much so that he felt an instant desire to make his acquaintance and had already taken steps to that end. Having consulted God in prayer, our holy Founder decided to accept the new postulant as soon as he could put his affairs in order and obtain the necessary permission from his superiors. This, after some slight opposition, was granted,

and Fr. Marcus Aurelius, to his great joy, was free to make the desired change in the year 1743; having spent twenty-four years in the Congregation of Christian Doctrine. Without delay he betook himself to Monte Argentaro, and entered upon his new life with all possible alacrity. Our holy Founder, in a letter written at this time to Canon Biagio Pieri of Vetralla, refers to the fervor of the new novice in the following terms: "We have here Father Pastorelli, a great servant of God: he is very contented and without difficulty follows our life of penance.....Believe me, if His Divine Majesty keeps this subject for us, it will be a great mercy which we shall share equally with people in general."

Under these circumstances our holy Founder was induced to ask for a pontifical dispensation to abbreviate the novitiate of this promising recruit, in virtue of which he was admitted to profession after a probation of only eight months. He assumed the name of Marcus Aurelius of the Most Holy Sacrament. The notes from which most of the particulars of his life are drawn, state that he was a man entirely given to prayer and study, ardent in the heroic exercise of every virtue; but above all, in ceaseless mortification and self-denial. by means of which he succeeded in hiding his rare talents and ability, even from our holy Founder himself, whose penetration it was no easy matter to elude.

But although his real value was not fully recognized at first sight, it was soon revealed by experience. Not long after his profession two new Retreats were founded, those namely of S. Angelo

near Vetralla, and of St. Eutizio near Soriano. Fr. John Baptist of St. Michael, brother of our holy Founder, was chosen as Rector of the first, while for the second it was thought well to make an experiment with Fr. Marcus Aurelius. The result demonstrated that a happier choice could not have been made. All those who composed the community were exemplary religious, nevertheless the word and example of the new superior contributed very greatly to render them still more eminent in the exercise of every virtue, insomuch that the people of the neighborhood used to speak of them as "the holy Fathers."



CHAPTER IV.

ELECTED MASTER OF NOVICES: THEN LECTOR AND CONSULTOR GENERAL.

MEANWHILE, applications for admission into the Congregation increased daily, and our holy Founder decided to establish a novitiate of a more formal kind, better adapted for the training of postulants according to the spirit of the Institute. Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus had been the first to fill the office of Novice Master, which he combined with that of Rector of the Retreat of the Presentation; but on account of his poor health it was found necessary to remove him and send him as Rector to the Retreat of S. Eutizio, while Fr. Marcus Aurelius was chosen to succeed him as Master of Novices at Monte Argentaro.

On his arrival there, Fr. Marcus Aurelius found a community of about twelve, including priests, clerics and novices. His first care was to put the novitiate in good order, in which he succeeded so well that it may be said with truth that we owe to Fr. Marcus Aurelius the method of training novices which was eventually adopted throughout the Congregation. He it was who introduced the Chapter after the morning meditation; the study and daily explanation of some verses of the new Testament, as a means of testing each one's capacity; also the practice of learning by heart and repeating ejaculatory prayers during recreation, and of recalling aloud during this time the presence of God; of frequent discourses in Choir on spiritual subjects; in a word, he was the principal originator of that ordered system of devout customs which by long practice in our novitiates have become traditions.

Circumstances, however, demanded that he should not hold this office for any length of time. The growth of the Congregation soon necessitated the foundation of a formal house of studies in which the now rapidly growing numbers of professed clerics might perfect themselves in philosophy and theology. The difficulty was to find a director. The Congregation possessed a man eminently fitted for the post in Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus, afterwards known as Monsignor Struzzieri, bishop of Todi; but our holy Founder was unwilling to assign him to it, because he considered him the best missionary in the Institute. Having occasion one day to speak with Father Lavairo, of the Congregation of Christian Doc-

trine, and a great friend and fellow citizen of Fr. Marcus Aurelius, the Saint mentioned to him the difficulty in which he found himself; adding that he was thinking of asking as a favor that one of the Christian Doctrine Fathers might be allowed to act for a time as director of studies. Whereupon, Fr. Lavairo said: "Are you really looking for a teacher, when you already have a very excellent and capable man?" "And who is that?" asked the Saint. "Father Marcus Aurelius," was the reply, "a man of profound and solid doctrine, who was known among us as 'the golden pen.' I am especially well acquainted with his gifts, because he studied theology under me"

A revelation so unexpected, aroused not only our holy Father's astonishment, but his admiration for the profound humility of Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who had not given the least sign of any aptitude of the kind. It scarcely seemed possible to him that he had already in the Congregation a treasure of such value. Therefore, after holding the office of Novice Master for about eighteen months, Fr. Marcus Aurelius was called to the Retreat of S. Angelo, near Vetralla, to take formal direction of the studies, towards the end of 1748, and for twelve years he continued to teach philosophy and theology to the great advantage of his students.

In the midst of this absorbing task, the good Father by no means diminished the fervor with which he had entered upon his religious life. Change of residence and duty were with him no excuse for relaxation, nor would he avail himself even of lawful exceptions and privileges. Natur-

ally, such an example served to stimulate the young students just out of the novitiate. Already, according to the Rules recently approved, the Religious were allowed to wear sandals. The concession was for a long time disregarded by Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who, notwithstanding the rigor of the climate, went barefoot, along with his pupils who were unwilling to be outdone in fervor by their director. To make him desist from rising for Matins at midnight with the rest of the community, our holy Founder was obliged to use his authority; but the fervent professor compensated himself by rising from bed as soon as the Religious had returned to their cells after Matins. The next three hours he devoted to his Mass and mental prayer.

Nor, while he directed the studies of the clerics at St. Angelo, did he altogether discontinue his work as a preacher of missions and retreats; moreover, he was at the same time called by the Chapter to fill the office of second Consultor General, which threw upon him a great deal of responsibility, since during the frequent absences of our holy Father from the Retreat, on the business of the Congregation or on missionary duty, it fell to Fr. Marcus Aurelius to supply his place.



CHAPTER V.

SENT AS PROVINCIAL TO THE PROVINCE OF THE
ADDOLORATA: AFTERWARDS GOES TO ROME TO
THE HOSPICE NEAR S. JOHN LATERAN.

THE rapid growth of the Congregation and the consequent increase in the number of foundations soon rendered it necessary to divide it into two provinces, of which one was called after the Presentation of Our Lady and the other after Our Lady of Dolors. The Provincial of the latter Province, Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus, having been elected Procurator General, it was necessary to replace him; and for this purpose Fr. Marcus Aurelius was selected. He obediently consented, though not without repugnance—for he was averse to anything which might naturally procure him the esteem of men—and left at once for the Southern Province of Campagna. The few records remaining lead us to suppose that at first he was inclined to rigor in his method of ruling the Province, a fact not to be wondered at when we remember his fervor of spirit and his thirst after perfection; added to which he had lived until that time, almost always with the novices and young students, in dealing with whom it had been necessary to restrain rather than urge them to fervor. His judgment and his solid virtue, however, soon led him to adopt a milder system, and he endeared himself to all by his prudence and charity. His success as Provincial is sufficiently demonstrated

by his confirmation in that office for a second term of three years, and then for a third, in virtue of a special pontifical dispensation.

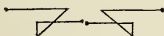
After nine years spent in this office, the Chapter of 1767 elected him Provincial Consultor, and he was called in that capacity to the newly opened hospice of the Most Holy Crucifix in Rome, near St. John Lateran, there to live with our holy Founder. Delighted to fill once more a comparatively subordinate position, Fr. Marcus Aurelius took occasion of the change to avoid everything distinctive of superiority. Notwithstanding his dignity as Provincial Consultor and his now advanced age, he was ever ready to fulfil the humbler duties of an ordinary religious. He looked after the chapel and sacristy, co-operated in the good government of the house, and above all, in promoting regular observance: nor did he ever refuse to hear confessions, to serve the sick in the hospital of S. Giovanni, or to exercise apostolic duties when called upon by his superiors.

On the Holy Thursday of 1768, the Father was seized by a violent fever, notwithstanding which he rose early in the morning to recite the divine office and make his Easter Communion with the rest. As a consequence he grew rapidly worse and at the end of the function was obliged to go to bed and put himself under the care of the doctor. He was bled more than once but without effect, until on the evening of Holy Saturday, the Fr. Procurator General advised him to prepare himself to receive the holy Viaticum. The invalid willingly consented, made his general confession that same night, and communicated on

Easter morning, expressing his will to die in complete conformity to the will of God.

The memorials tell us that his virtue at this time shone so visibly in his countenance that all, even the seculars who visited the servant of God, were moved to tears. His death was momentarily expected, but while preparations for anointing him with the holy oil were being made, the fever suddenly left him and his appearance visibly improved. This unexpected change was attributed to the prayers offered by the Religious and other persons for his recovery.

The restoration of Fr. Marcus Aurelius caused great joy throughout the Congregation, especially to our holy Founder, who, as soon as he heard that he was sufficiently strong, sent him to the Retreat of Paliano, that his health might be completely restored by the change of air. His removal had the desired effect, for in the following year, 1769, the Father was able to attend the General Chapter at the Retreat of S. Angelo near Vetralla, where he was elected second Consultor General. He then returned to the hospice in Rome, where he resumed his humble and mortified life.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

FROM what has been said of Fr. Marcus Aurelius the reader must have gathered the impression that he was endowed with great store of

virtue and firmness of spirit. Nor could things be otherwise in one who at the age of nearly fifty resolved to embrace the new Congregation with its austerities and with all the difficulties which beset it in the days of its foundation. Such a decision, indeed, could not be put into practice without a certain risk; but the result demonstrated that the ardor of the postulant arose from no passing whim, nor from fickleness of mind. As we have seen, he continued throughout his life in the same spirit which had actuated him from the beginning.

His life in the Congregation may be said to have been an unceasing holocaust offered to our Lord. Absolutely detached from the world, and dead to all earthly things, his only inclination and desire was to read and meditate upon holy books, and to converse with God in prayer. So constant in fact was his sense of God's presence, that his prayer was practically without interruption. Whoever saw or spoke with him was persuaded of this, such was his composure under all circumstances and his perseverance in recommending everyone to adopt this same exercise of prayer. But he was far from allowing his continual absorption in prayer to serve as an excuse for relenting or absenting himself from any duty. Quite the contrary. His natural character was very active, and he was the declared enemy of idleness. When, therefore, he was not actually at prayer, he was always engaged in study, in teaching, in hearing confessions, or other apostolic employments. And as soon as these duties were discharged, he returned immediately to the des-

ert of inward solitude. Such perseverance is all the more remarkable when we consider that from the time when he entered the Congregation God tried him with long and painful desolation of spirit. Notwithstanding this, the good Father never gave up or grew lukewarm in his devout meditations; he took advantage of every spare moment that he might retire to pray, and if he took exercise in the garden he either read as he walked or recited vocal prayers, especially the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Most Holy Mary, for which he had a special devotion. And if by chance, at the hour enjoined for prayer by the Rule, he was occupied in helping his neighbor, he never failed to supply the omission. To do this he would rob himself of sleep regardless of fatigue or disinclination.

As we narrated above, during his term as lector in theology, he was not permitted to rise with the others for Matins at midnight, but he would after Matins time spend three hours in Church. Now it happened one day that during the common recreation our holy Father remarked that this was too much, in view of the professional duties which awaited him later in the morning. Fr. Marcus Aurelius with deep humility replied: "Believe me, Father. I had hardly time to say three Paters and Aves." "Yes," resumed the Saint, "but it would take you six hours to finish them;" alluding to St. Francis of Assisi who passed several hours in repeating only the first word of the Pater Noster.

On a journey, after he had said many vocal prayers, he loved to walk in silence, and having

arrived at his destination, as soon as he had exchanged a few words of greeting, he withdrew alone to his room where he remained in holy recollection. Those who saw him praying before the Blessed Sacrament were greatly edified and deeply touched. It seemed, say the witnesses, as though penetrated with the conviction of the divine presence he trembled with fear, and annihilated himself in reverence. He often reminded priests that before offering to His divine Father the sacrifice of His life on Calvary, Jesus Christ spent three hours in Gethsemane. To a priest who sought from him consolation in his troubles, he wrote: "Make the most of the time in which you entertain the great Guest within you. Oh, how good a time that is in which to treat with God! You have then in your house the true consoler of the afflicted, and you go about seeking comfort elsewhere! A little more faith!"

In truth we may say of Fr. Marcus Aurelius that he was indeed a man of God, because his whole heart, his spirit and all his actions were animated by a right intention and by the most perfect charity.



CHAPTER VII.

HIS ZEAL AND PRUDENCE IN RULING:

HIS DOCILITY IN OBEYING.

SUCH continual converse with God had its effect in the lights therein received to guide him in his own spiritual progress and in his direction of others. His own course of action, any business

he had to undertake as well as the advice he gave to others, were usually blessed with a happy result. He was almost always in office as superior.

The standard by which he regulated his conduct is suggested by his reply to a newly appointed superior who had sought his counsel. *Superior omnia videat multa dissimulet, pauca castiget et cum charitate.* These words of St. Bernard he interpreted as follows: "A superior should let nothing escape notice, although many things, out of prudence, he should pretend not to see; let him punish but seldom, and always with charity, and for this reason, except when the case admits of no delay, let him sleep over it, at least for one night." The same Religious, on another occasion, was much afflicted because he found himself unable to adapt himself to an office which had been imposed upon him. Fr. Marcus Aurelius wrote in reply: "What seems to us humility is often pride. A man refuses to be superior on the pretext of wishing to attend only to himself, and does not remember that without God's help, he can be neither a good superior nor a good subject."

When he was Provincial, he abstained, as far as possible, from issuing orders or decrees which are usually a source of transgressions; choosing rather to counsel and correct offenders in private. On the other hand, when such necessity arose, he did not fail to make general regulations and was inexorable in exacting compliance with them. In individual cases, when it was a question of granting or denying permission, he easily gave his consent, so long as nothing contrary to the spirit of the Rules was asked for, but was firm and im-

movable in refusing that which his conscience did not approve. A certain Religious, for instance, ardently desired to give missions, but, on account of some natural indisposition, was ill-adapted for such work. He repeatedly asked Fr. Marcus Aurelius to allow him to undertake it, but always in vain. At length, when another Religious tried to persuade him by pointing out that the Father in question had done some good writing, the Provincial closed the discussion at once by saying: "He may have written the works of St. Augustine, but I cannot allow him to go on the mission."

In the Retreat where he lived as Provincial, he allowed the local Superiors free exercise of their authority, while, as he used to say, he stood as sentry to observe the conduct of all, not excepting the Rector. Nor did he omit, in its proper time and place, to give each one the hints he needed, not merely to avoid positive defects, but also those slighter imperfections which, if allowed to pass unheeded, become a serious obstacle to perfection. As an instance, perhaps, of his tact as superior, it is recorded how he succeeded in detaching a Father Consultor's affection from a devout picture—or image—which he had received as a gift. Waiting until the Father came to ask leave to retain it for his own use, Fr. Marcus Aurelius said: "Would it not be better, Father, to put it on the staircase of the Retreat? In your room it would serve your own devotion, but there it will increase the devotion of all." Needless to add the image was placed on the wall of the staircase.

No less strict than his watchfulness over others was the guard he kept over himself. The

servant of God was indeed a true mirror of virtue. Most scrupulous in his observance of the Rule, even in its smallest particulars, he was faithful to the end in this exactitude, as though he had been still a novice. In his cell nothing superfluous was ever to be found, and such articles as he had in use were all of the poorest. When he was not in office as superior, he would ask *toties quoties* for such things as were necessary. Among his letters still preserved, is one in which he asks a lay-brother to send him, out of charity, two of our badges, with the permission of the Rector of the Retreat.

In the matter of obedience, he was truly admirable. Impressed as he was with that infallible principle of Jesus Christ, *Qui vos audit, me audit*, he was never known to show the least unwillingness to accept the orders or even hints of his superiors, hard and naturally repugnant as they often were. Well aware of his solid virtue and the depth of his learning, our holy Founder often employed him in difficult matters; and because Fr. Marcus Aurelius loved to keep in the back-ground, such occasions always aroused in him a certain natural disinclination; nevertheless he was unfailingly obedient to the smallest wish of his superior, whoever he might be. Many of those who had been his novices, were in course of time elected to fill positions of responsibility, and it happened that one of them was Visitor while Fr. Marcus Aurelius was Provincial. The servant of God did not hesitate, under these circumstances, to go to his former novice, and on bended knees consult him as to the affairs of his soul; so deeply

was he imbued with the spirit of sincere humility and profound respect for legitimate authority.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS MASTERY OVER HIS PASSIONS.

FROM what has been said it is clear that the spirit of perfection which animated Fr. Marcus Aurelius had its origin in his complete dominion over his passions. It was impossible to come into contact with him and not perceive that he was a man truly dead to all created things, and dead, moreover, to himself. His avoidance of all curiosity, his small care for matters which did not concern him, marked him out as a man whose heart was detached from all things. In like manner his patience under every kind of treatment, his indifference to the delights and comforts of life showed him to be one who was absolute master of his appetites and inclinations.

No word of complaint in the matter of food or drink was ever heard from his lips; when asked whether this thing or that pleased him, his invariable reply was that it was good. In the last years of his life some hot food was served to him at the evening meal, but it often happened that the brother whose duty it was to prepare the dish would forget to do so. There was no danger, however, that the poor old man would by word or sign complain of his negligence: he invariably remained quiet and apparently unconcerned, as though he were quite satisfied.

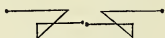
He did not as a rule approve of mortifications which were harmful to the health, and in giving advice on the subject, he would point out that it was the duty of a religious to preserve his health for the greater glory of God. On the other hand, he confined himself in this matter of food and drink to that which was strictly necessary; and in satisfying his ordinary wants he never failed to find some opportunity of mortification.

It was he who introduced among us the devout custom of leaving untouched fruit newly in season the first time it was brought to table, in remembrance of the ancient law *primitiæ Domino*. He suggested the observance of a similiar abstinence on each day of the novenas which it was the custom to make in common, so that the sacrifice of the special prayers offered on such occasions might be accompanied by some particular mortification. He inculcated a similiar mortification whenever some necessity had to be satisfied, or some innocent indulgence was thought desirable; recommending that an offering be made to God of the first act, thus transforming it into a sacrifice of renunciation.

Against self-esteem and so called "honor" he was especially ardent in combat, even to the point of singularity. His war against anything and everything of the kind was open, ceaseless and inexorable; so unweariedly did he strive to humble himself before God and man. The knowledge of himself and of his own nothingness was the book which he had ever before his eyes, and which he endeavored to master; and this in no speculative but eminently practical manner,

for he let slip no occasion which might make him appear ignorant and useless. On this account he loved to be hidden and avoided to the best of his power all conversation with people who might possibly give him cause to imagine that they thought well of him.

Pope Clement XIV, who, as Cardinal, had known him well, had so great an esteem for him, that he used at times to send him messages and recommend himself to his prayers. The good Father was far indeed from being vain of such notice. He kept away as much as he could from pontifical audiences, and once when obliged to attend, he had no other favor to ask of his Holiness than to be absolved *ad cautelam* from some ecclesiastical censure which he might possibly have incurred. His request was granted, but the Pope could not repress a smile.



CHAPTER IX.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

THE examples which will be adduced in this chapter will place the mortification of Fr. Marcus Aurelius before us in a clearer light.

A Cardinal Bishop, believing that in so doing he was acting within his rights, sent his representatives to make a canonical visitation of one of our Retreats situate in his diocese. Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who happened to be supplying the place of an absent superior, received the ecclesiastics

with all due respect, but thought it his duty to declare that the Congregation enjoyed the privilege of exemption. The visitors thereupon went away, but without showing the least sign of displeasure. The matter, nevertheless, was represented to the Cardinal Bishop with some exaggeration. Shortly afterwards the servant of God going to pay his Eminence a visit, met with a reception so unpleasantly formal that he felt he was being treated as if he were a proud and conceited person. Far from resenting the Cardinal's conduct, he smilingly said in reply to a friend who expressed his surprise: "Is it at all strange that he should tell me that I am proud? It is only what I often say to myself; therefore his Eminence has only spoken the truth."

If Fr. Marcus Aurelius positively delighted in any signs of contempt which he might meet with, no less intense was his displeasure if anyone manifested esteem for him. His countenance would change directly, and he would even be betrayed into some harsh expression of resentment. In his last illness, not to speak of other occasions, a Religious, who had formerly been his disciple, thought to exhort him to suffer patiently by saying: "Cheer up, Father, our Lord wishes by this illness still more to prove and try you." "Proofs, Trials, indeed! This is a punishment which I justly deserve for my sins."

Another day the same Religious, rather presuming on the confidence with which the invalid treated him, remarked in the presence of another priest who was exhorting the sick man to patience, that Fr. Marcus Aurelius was ready to suffer even

more. Hearing these words the humble servant of God exclaimed: "Do not say such things to me. They displease me very much. I do not belong to that class of souls. I possess no such virtue. If you come here to talk to me in that manner, pray enter my room no more."

A Religious, seeing how deeply Fr. Marcus Aurelius was penetrated by the fear of divine judgments, tried to encourage him by saying: "So many years a priest; so many years a religious: what do you fear?" And he wished to continue in the same strain when the sufferer interrupted him exclaiming: "What sort of priest? What kind of religious?"—thus putting an end to discourse which he thought might gratify his vanity.

It is related, on the other hand, that one day a Religious exhorted him to make frequent acts of faith, hope and charity. "Yes," he replied, greatly pleased, "kindly suggest some to me." Thus did he show his willingness to learn, like an ignorant man.

If it is true that solid virtue is proved by great suffering, what we have hitherto said establishes the fact that Fr. Marcus Aurelius gave ample testimony of its possession. The reader, too, is well aware that during his eighty years of life and his many occupations, he had to encounter various and by no means inconsiderable difficulties. Nevertheless we will add a few further instances which have been handed down to us.

It was once his duty as superior to point out a defect to a certain Religious who, instead of taking the correction in a proper spirit, was

carried away by passion, and under its influence made a mortifying retort in the presence of others. The servant of God, who, as superior, could easily have silenced this unruly subject by the infliction of some penance, thought it better to let the injury pass unnoticed, to the great edification of all who were present. Another time he had to administer similar correction to a local superior. This Religious, also, failed to receive the admonition in good part, and on various other occasions showed his resentment in a way which sorely tried the patience of the uncomplaining old man.

The reader must not conclude, because of his silence under insult, that Fr. Marcus Aurelius was of a phlegmatic nature. Quite the contrary, he was all vivacity; as he confessed to a friend. "You would imagine me to be of a peaceable disposition, but I am quite otherwise." Thus without intending it did he illustrate the absolute mastery over himself to which he had attained. The many infirmities which often brought him to death's door were the occasions of further examples of the same self-mastery. Under all such circumstances Fr. Marcus Aurelius never failed to show himself a true disciple of Jesus Crucified. Always humble, patient and meek, he was never heard to complain of the doctor or of the infirmarian or his assistants, nor did he ever find fault with his food or anything else. His lamentations were confined to such expressions as: "Ah! the world is full of woe." But he was more frequently heard to say: *Domine fiat voluntas tua: Sit nomen Domini benedictum in æternum et ultra.* "Ah, dear Jesus." And if ever he displayed the shadow of annoyance, it

was when he imagined that some one was pitying him; he was better pleased when exhorted to suffer.

We will close this chapter with the words of the author of the memorials of the servant of God: "We protest that we have said very little of that great store of virtue which God has showered on this blessed soul. We have done as one who enters a spacious and flowery garden, and while he admires the variety and beauty of the blossoms, gathers only a few making a little nosegay to refresh himself withal. So may the small collection which we have made of the virtues of Fr. Marcus Aurelius suffice to furnish us with motives to praise God in His faithful servant and to urge us to follow his example."



CHAPTER X.

HIS PRECIOUS DEATH : OUR HOLY FOUNDER'S ESTEEM FOR HIM.

IN THE Lent of 1773, notwithstanding the indispositions which troubled him, Fr. Marcus Aurelius undertook to give a course of spiritual exercises to the servants of the hospital of the Holy Spirit in Rome. He was accompanied by another Religious, but he could not finish the exercises owing to terrible pains in one of his legs, for which reason his companion was obliged to continue the work alone. On his arrival at our Hospice the good old man was obliged to go to

bed and put himself under the doctors. But before he had recovered from the original ailment, similar trouble betrayed itself in his left hand. Gangrene set in and the physician declared the malady to be mortal. In a few days he was obliged to discontinue saying Mass and content himself with receiving holy Communion in bed. This sickness he received as God's chastisement for his sins; and this feeling so completely possessed him that he grew afraid to make his Communion daily, until he was obliged out of obedience to our holy Founder.

Meanwhile the 9th of December arrived, the day fixed for the removal of the Community to the house and Church of SS. John and Paul. Fr. Marcus Aurelius was conveyed thither in a portable chair, and after praying for some time before the Blessed Sacrament and the tombs of the holy martyrs, was taken to his room and put once more to bed.

His malady grew rapidly worse and his strength visibly declined, to the great compassion of all who saw him. In their eyes he seemed another Job, weighed down with sufferings and at the same time a pattern of every virtue. One of our Religious having said to him one day: "You have quite abandoned yourself to God," he replied: "Oh! is it such a great thing for us to abandon ourselves into the hands of God, when God gave Himself entirely into the hands of sinners for love of us?" Again, when encouraged in his sufferings, he replied: "My sins deserve something very different. I have been a wicked man." Or he would say: "This is nothing; very

different was the sufferings of Jesus Christ for us." Asked how he felt, he would generally answer: "Let us thank God." The only time he ever admitted that he felt ill was during his final moments, when the struggle with death had already begun.

It had been noticed with the approach of this last hour, that God tried this blessed soul still further with the hard iron of pain and suffering, while on his side the dying man gave still more beautiful examples of unalterable patience and submission to the will of God. Prostrate in his bed, he spent all his time in fervent prayer and devout aspirations. And as long as he could continue to say it, he never neglected the daily recitation of the Chaplet of our Lady of Dolors, his special patroness.

But on March 16, after dinner, he was suddenly surprised by a very violent fit of trembling and convulsions in addition to the paralysis which had afflicted him for some days. The doctor was called, but very soon everyone saw that this seizure was a sign of approaching death. The sacraments having been administered, it remained only to prepare him for the final blessings. When asked by the Father Rector if he wished to receive them, he replied: "You will do me a great charity," and they were imparted before evening, to his great content. At last, towards three o'clock in the morning, acts of the theological virtues were suggested to him, together with devout aspirations, while he kept his eyes fixed on the picture of our Lady of Dolors. He then turned them towards the religious as though to take

leave of them, and slightly bending his head, he gave up his spirit to his Creator. Of his eighty years and nearly six months of life, he had spent thirty years in the Congregation, during which time he had been the almost inseparable companion of our holy Founder and his brother Fr. John Baptist.

His body was carried into the adjoining basilica of SS. John and Paul, and as soon as the death of Fr. Marcus Aurelius became known many people came to see the remains. Such was their devotion that they quickly cut off his hair and a great portion of his habit to keep as relics. We must not neglect to record that our holy Founder, when the body was carried past his room on its way to the Church, gave a last token of his great esteem for Fr. Marcus Aurelius and the high opinion he had of his sanctity. He ordered that when the bier had reached the door of his cell the bearers should stop. Then the Saint, supported by two religious, came forth to salute the body of his spiritual son. Kissing his feet with many tears, he begged his pardon for any displeasure he might have caused him during the many years they had lived together. Then, between sighs and sobs he exclaimed: "Oh, this was and is a great servant of God; a great saint."

How greatly he had esteemed him during his life we may gather from the fact that to Fr. Marcus Aurelius our holy Father gave all his confidence. Before deciding anything of importance he would say to the religious: "Go to Fr. Marcus Aurelius and ask his opinion;" and when he had heard it, he revered it as an oracle. During his

last illness—for at the same time our holy Founder was himself much afflicted with various ailments—he would often get some one to lead him to Fr. Marcus Aurelius' room to console and talk with him. And as he left the cell to return to his own, the Saint would say: "The virtue of Fr. Marcus Aurelius is truly heroic, the virtue of a great saint."

When the servant of God had breathed his last, the brother infirmarian went immediately to carry the tidings of this holy death to St. Paul of the Cross. But he had hardly opened the door when the Saint exclaimed: "I already know. Fr. Marcus Aurelius has passed to a better life." Early next morning he said Mass in the chapel adjoining his cell for the deceased Father's soul, and when he had finished the holy Sacrifice, with many tears, he said to one of the religious: "Our Lord has made me understand, and has deigned to comfort me with the knowledge that that blessed soul has gone to enjoy the glory of paradise in reward for his great labors and sufferings."

We will conclude these notes by recounting certain facts which, although of purely human testimony, will not be altogether out of place here, as confirming the virtues and perfection of the servant of God.

Fr. Marcus Aurelius was the first of our Religious to pass to a better life in the house of SS. John and Paul after it was given to the Congregation by Pope Clement XIV. Now it is worthy of record that when he lived at the Hospice of St. John Lateran two years previously, he repeatedly said that no member of our Congregation would

die in that Hospice until God had provided us with a house and Church; and that when these had been found for us, he himself would be the first to die. The event proved the truth of his prediction and we may well suppose that it was made in virtue of some light from on high.

We find among the memorials a statement that a devout person, who had heard that Fr. Marcus Aurelius was near his end, saw that night in her sleep three personages of great beauty and of grave and benign aspect. The one in the middle was dressed in red with a white cotta and stole, and wore on his head a diadem of incomparable splendor. Who this figure was she could not understand, though she took the others to be angels. She therefore presumed to ask who the person in the middle really was, but the two companions with many smiles answered that for the present she must be satisfied to have seen him and that afterwards she would learn his identity. Upon this she awoke, and taking note of the time, saw that it was the fourth hour of the night. Next morning she heard that on the previous night at that precise hour, Fr. Marcus Aurelius had passed to the other life, and at the same time she felt an inward assurance that the person she had seen in her dream was no other than he.

In the year 1779, a person of holy life, who was in great spiritual affliction, and troubled with temptations of every kind, was suddenly visited by two religious, one of whom was dressed as a Passionist and the other as a regular clerk of the Mother of God. She asked them who they were, remarking that she had never previously seen

them. Thereupon, the one who wore the Passionist habit said to her: "It is true that you have never seen me; but know that I am the first Religious of the Passion buried in the Church of SS. John and Paul." He then encouraged her to suffer her afflictions willingly, and advised her to recommend herself to Father Paul of the Cross, adding that she was already under obligation to him for having miraculously cured her of a very serious illness in the preceding year. Then leaving her quite comforted, he disappeared.

And here let us end, in the assurance that we have put before the devout reader sufficient material to enable him to conceive a very exalted idea of this holy religious who contributed so much to the establishment of the Congregation. We must recognize in him a man sent by God to the new Institute to help and support it in the midst of so many difficulties. And as certainly Fr. Marcus Aurelius did not disappoint the desires and intentions of divine providence, so now we may justly believe that he continues to protect it from heaven by his intercession with God in the glory of the saints.





Fr. John Thomas of St. Francis Xavier

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION.

LET us now proceed to write the edifying memorials which remain to us of another Father, who, among the many called to the new Institute, was one of the few who remained faithful to the voice of God, and had the happiness of being trained under the eye of our holy Father and of living afterwards in his society. This is Fr. John Thomas of St. Francis Xavier, whose virtues, although they were not displayed in the eyes of the world in such a manner as to render him an object of its admiration, were none the less real, none the less deserving in the sight of God. God not unfrequently performs wonderful works unknown or unobserved by man, simply for His own pleasure and glory. Think of many a humble flower which opens to the first rays of the sun only to fall under the scythe! What beauty is enclosed in its little compass! And yet it is never looked upon by human eye, not even for an instant, nor does any perceive the sweetness of its perfume. But God has seen it, and that suffices.

To such a hidden flower we may compare the soul of our Fr. John Thomas, of whom it may be said that, excepting those few with whom he lived, hardly anyone knew him. But in the sight of God he was truly a source of delight; because the days of his life were full of rich and virtuous actions, as will appear from the pages which follow.

He was born at Chiavari, in the republic of Genoa, on November 8, 1701. His parents, Pier Francesco Riparla and Camilla de Tori, were both well known and much respected by their fellow-townsmen. The child at his baptism two days after birth, received the name of John Thomas. His father and mother thought more of piety and virtue than of pride of birth, and therefore when the infant opened his eyes to the light of this world, he beheld himself surrounded by that loving care whose first solicitude is to nourish a child not only with milk but with the seeds of Christian principles which in later years produce the beautiful fruit of holiness. So it was in this family. Of the seven sons of the devout and virtuous parents, six consecrated themselves to God. Three became priests, and three, including Fr. John Thomas, also, entered the religious state.

Although, out of humility, this servant of God used to say that he was the only member of the family who had received this holy training in vain, it is known that he was not outstripped by any of his brothers in his attention to filial duties. He was subject in all things to the wishes of his parents, who noticed that from his earliest years he began to give signs of rare virtue, especially by acts of mortification and charity. He was ex-

tremely fond of sweet things and particularly of a certain homely dish prepared with honey; but in order to mortify himself he would, instead of eating it, give his share to some sick person. Another time he entreated his mother to give twenty *sequins* to a certain needy institution, to which he carried the money himself.

Such instances point to the way along which this beautiful soul was to be led by Divine Providence. His contemporaries, at any rate, had no doubt that so devout a youth would end by consecrating himself entirely to God. Nor were they deceived, for he very soon made known to the proper persons that he felt himself inspired to embrace the ecclesiastical state. The memorials do not give particulars of the way in which he prepared himself for this step. The fact that no opposition was offered to his intention by the ecclesiastical authorities sufficiently demonstrates that his preparation lacked none of the conditions which the Church exacts of those who aspire to enter her sanctuary.



CHAPTER II.

HIS VOCATION TO THE CONGREGATION.

FATHER John Thomas ordained priest on September 19, 1733, by Monsignor Franchi, Archbishop of Genoa, now began to advance with fresh ardor along the path of perfection. Assiduous in his attendance in choir, he allowed

himself no amusements, though he would spend many hours at Church in prayer, especially in the morning, the greater part of which he occupied in preparing himself for and offering the holy Sacrifice. He frequently withdrew to the house of the Fathers of the Mission where he made the spiritual exercises. In a word, his life was that of a true priest and worthy of all imitation.

Our Lord, however, began to put his virtue to the test, trying His new minister by His accustomed method of tribulation. An obstinate illness obliged him to take to his bed, and all remedies were applied in vain. The virtue of the humble priest, now tried as gold in the crucible, was equal to the occasion. He made no complaint, asked for no restoratives, and refused to talk about his illness, which, but for its external manifestations, might thus have been concealed from everyone. Even those in the house with him at first made light of it, until observing that his state grew less satisfactory day by day, they called in the doctor, who seeing at once how ill the patient really was, gave little or no hope of his recovery, and eventually suggested that he should receive the last Sacraments. But God who held in reserve for His servant great merits and rewards, restored his health, and contrary to the expectation of everyone, the sick man was soon able to leave his bed, having completely regained his strength.

It happened about this time that our holy Founder and his brother Fr. John Baptist, were invited to give a mission in Chiavari. Hardly had our young priest cast his eyes on the two missionaries, and before he had even heard them

preach, than he felt the influence of the holiness which seemed to emanate from them. Their modesty, their humble deportment, their penitential habit rendered words unnecessary. Touched by grace he resolved to give himself to the Congregation of the Passion, which St. Paul of the Cross divinely inspired was then establishing in the Church.

Having come to this decision, he chose the first opportunity to present himself to the two missionaries, and to tell them with much humility that he felt himself called to join their Congregation; adding that if they were willing, he for his part was ready, but only on condition that they would be content with him as he was—full of ignorance and good for nothing. These dispositions were extremely pleasing to our holy Founder, who with the discernment of a saint, recognized in this postulant a soul already given wholly to God and anxious to advance in perfection. He therefore made no difficulty about accepting him, while Fr. John Baptist, whose austere character was little apt to indulge in joyous demonstrations, on this occasion could not refrain from giving outward expression to his satisfaction. Placing his hand on the young priest's shoulder he said: "Oh, this is indeed a true vocation."

Encouraged by this reception, Fr. John Thomas was more than ever determined to abandon all things and follow the call of God; therefore without delay he put his affairs in order, and having taken leave of his family set out for Monte Argentaro to begin his probation. On his arrival, instead of being frightened by the solitude of the

place, by the poverty and austerity of the life led by the newly enlisted soldiers of Christ, he experienced all the content and satisfaction of a soul who sees all its doubts and fears dissolved in a single instant, and feels itself assured by conscience that it is acting according to the will of God. After the usual preliminaries required by our Constitutions, the postulant was clothed with the habit of the Passion on 2nd July, 1743.



CHAPTER III.

HIS FERVENT NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION.

THE novice beholding himself far removed from a world which he had always despised, and all his longings fulfilled, did not delay to begin at once his service of our Lord, in the manner indicated by the spirit of the Institute which he had embraced. It must be remembered that in those early days when as yet our Rules had not been confirmed, the mitigations afterwards introduced by Pope Benedict XIV when he solemnly approved the Institute, were not yet in practice. Whence, in the Retreats, all went barefoot without sandals; meat was never eaten, and except on certain festivals eggs and white meats were not used. Except on Sundays and feast days, the Religious fasted daily throughout the year. During the night they remained in choir nearly three hours; and there were in addition many austerities and mortifications eventually modified by the Pope.

Fr. John Thomas, therefore, found them all intact when he joined the novitiate; but this fact did not deter him. Delicately nurtured as he had been at home he nevertheless submitted to this mortified and penitential life with all possible alacrity and fervor; while he practised obedience and self-abnegation so faithfully that he became as a child in the hands of his directors, or as a dead body which allows itself to be carried here or there without protest. As an example of his practice of this mystic death, we may relate that one day during the common recreation one of his fellow novices, who was a priest, laughed so immoderately that the bench on which he was sitting shook under him. Whereupon, Fr. John Thomas, as he himself afterwards confessed, conceived such an abhorrence for unrestrained mirth, that as long as he lived he never laughed aloud, although his face was always cheerful and seldom without a smile.

With this system of cutting himself off day by day from everything opposed to virtue, the young priest quickly attained a high degree of perfection, so that our holy Founder, either because he was in extreme want of professed religious for the new foundations he was making, or because he was sufficiently assured as to the vocation and fervor of the novice, obtained from the Holy See permission to abbreviate the time of probation. Fr. John Thomas, accordingly, pronounced his vows with great fervor on the 1st of March, 1744, happy in thus being able to bind himself more closely to the cross of Jesus Christ, the sole object of his desires.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS SPIRIT OF PRAYER, AND HOW HE
WAS TRIED BY GOD.

HAVING confirmed by his religious profession the mystical sacrifice of himself to God, and being now numbered once for all among the little flock of the Passion, Fr. John Thomas very soon diffused around him the good odor of all the virtues. We find it written in the memorials that he walked continually in the faith of God's presence and that he never severed his intimate union with the Supreme Good, which he kept unbroken chiefly by means of prayer, of which he never tired. It was a beautiful thing to see him at that time, immovable and fixed in his place, all concentrated and absorbed in meditation as though he were finding in it all his consolation, his support and all his good. When he was elected Rector of the Retreat of the Cerro, near Toscanella, he began, because of the increase of his occupations, to deprive himself of the rest which the holy Rules allow after the recitation of Matins, to compensate for the time which he had to give later to the affairs of the house, and which, consequently, he would not devote to prayer. Indeed, he practically never laid aside this exercise of constant union with God, which was ever visible in his composure and recollection. It was enough to have seen him to be convinced that he continually lived in the presence of God.

Herein lay the secret of that ardent and fruitful charity which incited him to undertake with

alacrity every work however difficult, which he knew would redound to the glory of God. To busy himself in the lowest and most laborious duties in the house he counted as nothing; nay he was eager to obtain leave to perform them. He was delighted above all if they were the occasion of suffering. And our most benign Lord, seeing such beautiful and heroic dispositions, did not fail to satisfy and content him by allowing him often to share the bitter sorrows which His Divine Son bore for our good. For which reason the servant of God was troubled now with one infirmity and now with another, and on every such occasion he was a model of virtue for those who saw and spoke with him. Never did he complain of lack of attendance, or of the medicines, or of the pains which he suffered. At such times he always kept silent and recollected, reposing in God as a child in the bosom of its mother; and to all who asked him how he was he would reply very quietly: "I am quite well."

But his frequent indispositions never served him as an excuse for absenting himself from the common life. Once when he was a member of the community of St. Angelo, near Vetralla, he was seized by a quartan fever which tormented him for years; but not on this account did he ask for any exemptions. On the contrary, no sooner did the fever abate than the father resumed his occupations and undertook fatiguing work as though he had suffered nothing. Moved with compassion, our holy Founder seeing him in this condition, called him one day and told him he wished to bless him and pray God to cure him. But this

humble Religious all enamored with suffering, thanking his superior protested that he did not think it well to accept the proffered blessing, because he set great store by this Cross which God had sent him. Our holy Founder, much edified at such a reply said no more, but let the servant of God to merit by his sufferings.

But God to test still further this blessed soul, and to enrich it by merit, permitted that to his bodily infirmities should be added that kind of tribulation with which great souls known to be brave are usually tried. Fr. John Thomas preserved with the greatest care and constant mortification of his senses the beautiful lily of purity. Now it was precisely in this angelic virtue that our Lord willed to put His servant to the proof, by allowing the demon to assail him with the strongest temptations. He manifested to his confessor one day that as a rule when he entered his cell for sleep he found it full of demons in visible shape who, that they might tempt him the more fiercely, assumed all sorts of horrid and frightful forms, though full of flattery and seduction, to lead him to sin. In this terrible contest he declared he was obliged to pass whole nights without the necessary repose, while such was the violence and anguish occasioned by the onslaught that he often fell ill of fever. However, our Lord watched over him, ever strengthening His servant with divine grace, perfecting him in virtue and enriching him with fresh crowns for paradise.

CHAPTER V.

HIS HUMILITY.

IT cannot be doubted that Fr. John Thomas' victory over these diabolical suggestions was, after the powerful help of divine grace, the result of his profound humility. Indeed we may prudently assert that this precious virtue was his in such a high degree as to constitute his special characteristic. His lively knowledge of his own wretchedness made him form so low an estimate of himself that it can neither be imagined nor described. He let no occasion pass of manifesting it to others both in word and deed. He apparently desired to be taken for an ignorant, good-for-nothing person.

But let it not be thought that the humility of Fr. John Thomas was of that false and superficial kind which, satisfied with appearances, detests humiliation when it is inflicted by others. On the contrary, it was of that sincere and solid description which proceeds from inner conviction and true knowledge of self, as was manifest on several unexpected occasions. It was enough to correct or blame him, even without reason; he would give visible signs of content. He was closely united in the bonds of charity with Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who availed himself of this friendship to draw from it great spiritual profit for Fr. John Thomas. The latter being called on a certain occasion to visit some sick people, at once prepared to go, taking with him some oil from the lamp which burned before the image of our Lady. The fact

was immediately made known to Fr. Marcus Aurelius, by whom it was not allowed to pass without notice. He began to find fault, which he did pretty severely, and after many contemptuous and scornful expressions, wound up by calling him a proud man who presumed to go about working miracles. The humble servant of God, quite unperturbed received this correction with his usual cheerfulness, pleasantly adding that if the sick persons should regain their health, it would not be attributable to his miserable self, but to the most holy Madonna, so good and so full of pity for our wretchedness.

The same humility was exemplified on another occasion when our holy Founder, well knowing the solid virtue of Fr. John Thomas, publicly mortified and reproved him. He at once threw himself on his knees, and silently remained in that position, with hands joined until it pleased our holy Founder to raise him, rejoicing all the while in the humiliation thus received.

While he lived amongst us, Fr. John Thomas was almost always Rector or Vice Rector, invariably looking upon these offices not as ministering to his own honor and convenience, but taking advantage of these to employ himself with greater freedom in the lowest and most fatiguing duties of the house. Very often after the morning meditation, he would go into the kitchen where he would ask the brother cook to tell him what to do; meeting any disinclination to comply, with an order to do so under obedience. One day, during his residence at the Retreat of S. Eutizio, Brother Lawrence of the Side of Jesus, who happened to

be cook, went so far as to say to him: "Father, have patience; you are superior; it is therefore your place to command." At the good brother's word, Fr. John Thomas went on his knees, and as though the brother had said nothing, continued to importune him to give him something to do. Not content with this he returned to the kitchen after dinner to wash the dishes and clean the pots and pans, always intent upon performing the humblest offices as though he were the servant of all.

Similar contempt of himself was visible in all the things he used. His habit and mantle were covered with patches, until they looked like garments made up of rags. He always chose the worst room. In the Retreat of S. Angelo, he selected the smallest of all the cells; and as he was very tall, it was impossible for him to stretch himself at full length on the poor mattress. Of this he made no account, and even in his last illness he could only be induced to change his room by stratagem. Such instances place before us his love of poverty, the daughter and legitimate consequence of the humility of which he was so bright an example.

Notwithstanding his care to the contrary, he could not prevent the good odor of his sanctity from spreading beyond the limits of the community; whence it was that many seculars desiring much to see him and to be edified by his virtue, would visit the Retreat for that purpose. But when he came to know of this, he would either hide himself or find some way of making himself ridiculous.

It happened one day that some persons of distinction came up to the Retreat of S. Angelo on purpose to see Fr. John Thomas, who was at that time superior. Finding himself unable to avoid the meeting, he made use of an expedient which somewhat resembles that of which we read in the life of St. Philip Neri. Taking a barrel on his shoulder, he carried it to the well, and having filled it with water, he replaced it on his shoulder, and on his way back to the Retreat walked through the party of visitors, without making himself known. At last, tired perhaps of waiting, they again asked the religious if they could not see the superior. "But have you not already seen him?" was the reply. "Our superior is he who passed with the barrel on his shoulder; that is Fr. John Thomas." The visitors were naturally not a little surprised, but at once understanding the intention of the servant of God, they went away more edified than possibly they might have been if he had given them a long discourse.

A great personage once called at the same Retreat, and after being received by our holy Founder with great esteem, expressed a wish to see Fr. John Thomas. A long search having been made for him all over the Retreat, he was at length found in the bakery, whence no persuasions availed to move him until our holy Founder gave express orders that he was to appear.

It seemed in fact as though this blessed Father centered all his efforts on annihilating himself and making himself despised by others, in order that upon such a foundation he might raise the edifice of his perfection.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOR.

IF Fr. John Thomas was so humble as to consider himself a useless man, undeserving of any regard, this in itself is an indication of his charity towards his neighbor; because in proportion as our self esteem decreases, our esteem and love for others increases. The memorials show him to be actuated by a tenderness that was almost maternal for all but especially for his brethren in religion. Almost always in office as Rector or Vicar, his first thought seems to have been to provide for the wants of all and of each one in particular; whence he was continually trying to find out how he could lighten the tasks of this or that religious, even in purely material things. Very often, as we have said above, he would go to the kitchen to help the cook; and if after dinner he thought that the brother's work was so excessive as to oblige him to sacrifice the repose allowed by the holy Rules after recreation, he would go and send him away while he himself did whatever remained to be done.

Towards the religious who were sick his charity was boundless. Imitating the solicitude of our holy Founder, whose example was ever before him, he took every possible care of them, seeing that their food and restoratives were prepared with all due attention, and even delicacy. With our young students, he showed himself full of charity, always solicitous that they should not be deprived of any of those things allowed them

by the holy Rule; and during the Autumn vacation it was a pleasure to see his anxiety that they should be given some extra refreshment to take with them on their walks. In a word, the charity which filled Fr. John Thomas was precisely that of which the Apostle Paul spoke which is "all things to all men," in order that it may draw them to serve God better and encourage them to religious perfection.

Nor was his charity restricted to the walls of the Retreat. While he was superior he never allowed the poor to be sent away without alms, which he caused to be distributed to them as often as the poverty of the house permitted. Seeing in them the image of Jesus Christ suffering, his heart melted at the sight of their wretchedness, and he would give them all of which he could reasonably dispose. Many times he would send flour, bread and vegetables to those who were sick and unable to support themselves. With the same charity he tried to comfort the afflicted and distressed. He never neglected to visit a sick person who had asked to see him or receive his blessing. How pleasing all this was to God was proved more than once, as we shall see in the next chapter.



CHAPTER VII.

THE EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS WHICH HE RECEIVED FROM GOD.

IN the clearer understanding of that which we are about to say, it is necessary to remember that Fr. John Thomas was not endowed by nature

with any uncommon talent, and that he was not greatly advanced in literature and the sciences. But the absence of such advantages only served to set in a stronger light the wonderful gifts of spiritual knowledge, wisdom and counsel with which he was enriched by God, who in the distribution of these supernatural favors is not influenced by our natural endowments but by His most holy will alone.

And in fact how could Fr. John Thomas, ignorant as he was of those human means of influencing others, which are usually the fruit of long years of study, console the afflicted with wonderful skill? How could he persuade with unanswerable reasons, and train with his gentle teachings not merely his religious brethren but also strangers who had recourse to him, were it not for the remarkable gifts bestowed upon him by Providence? We find that no religious who went with his troubles or doubts to him ever left him unconsolated. Moreover, his singular gift of grace enabled him in the very act of administering spiritual comfort, to enkindle the souls of those who consulted him with his own ardor for religious perfection.

We know that our holy Founder, himself an experienced master in the directing souls to perfection, in his doubts and in those terrible desolations, in which it pleased God to keep him, used to go to Fr. John Thomas for comfort and consolation. His office as superior obliged him to address the religious in chapter or in the exhortations which are customary amongst us. Yet, notwithstanding his moderate ability and imper-

fect memory, he trusted entirely in God, and began his address with such soundness of argument, with such spirit and fervor, that our Lord seemed to be speaking through the mouth of His servant. As a consequence the religious vied with one another in submitting their spiritual affairs to him.

In like manner he was known on several occasions to resolve doubts on theological questions of the most abstruse description. One day, for instance, he was visited by two learned canons between whom arose some dispute on a question of theology, which they were quite unable to solve satisfactorily. They referred the matter to Fr. John Thomas, but, as was to be supposed, his humility forbade him at first to throw any light upon it. At last, after much importunity on the part of the worthy ecclesiastics, he modestly stated his opinion in a few words, resolving the doubt so well that they were greatly impressed by the knowledge more than human possessed by the servant of God.

But our Lord was pleased not only to endow him with supernatural gifts, but also with other favors only met with in the lives of the Saints. Of these we will give some few instances. Signora Teresa Mazzarigi of Piansano deposed upon oath that being grievously ill with an abcess in her throat, she was almost given up by the doctors. She sent however for Fr. John Thomas, then Rector of the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro, who quickly answered the summons, bringing with him a little holy water. This he gave her to drink, telling her at the same time to have faith

in the holy Virgin. Scarcely had she swallowed the water when the trouble disappeared, leaving her in perfect health.

The wife of Venturino Lucchetti di Vallerano, in the diocese of Civita Castellano, broke her arm in consequence of a fall. Some days afterwards, the injured limb being in a bandage, she met Fr. John Thomas in the street. Asking his blessing, she told him what had happened to her; upon which the Father, touching her arm, said: "Have no fear; it is nothing." And from that moment all pain ceased. Within a week she removed the bandage and found herself perfectly cured, greatly to the wonder of the doctors who attended her.

Our Fr. Anthony of Calvary relates that during his residence in the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro, when Fr. John Thomas was superior, he gave him a letter which he—Fr. Anthony—had received from Thomas Ruffo, one of our benefactors at Chiavari, in which he said that his brother-in-law had spent two years in bed owing to a malady, which prevented him from maintaining his family, for this reason he begged Fr. Anthony to recommend him very much to our Lord, that he might receive some assistance from Providence. Having read the letter, Fr. John Thomas requested Fr. Anthony to come to him the next morning to write an answer. He accordingly sought the Rector's cell at the time appointed and found Fr. John Thomas in bed, where he was confined by some indisposition. The servant of God, nevertheless, began to dictate the letter, bidding Fr. Anthony write instructions for the sick man to make a little offering to the miraculous Madonna

venerated at Chiavari, and with lively faith to have himself annointed with oil from the lamp which burned before that holy image; adding that he would soon be able to rise from bed. Fr. Anthony full of wonder at such sort of instructions, and thinking that probably the Rector was wandering in his mind owing to the fever, excused himself from proceeding further, saying that he would return on the morrow to finish the letter. Next day his superior dictated the same sentences as before, and when he found Fr. Anthony hesitated to write, he sat up in bed and said in a resolute voice: "Write just what I have dictated; this is God's will." Fr. Anthony immediately obeyed, wrote the letter and despatched it to its destination. After about a month an answer arrived in which Thomas Ruffo thanked the servant of God, and informed him that his brother-in-law was now up and completely rid of his infirmity.

The supernatural gift by means of which Fr. John Thomas did so much good in the service of his neighbor was occasionally used on his own behalf. When he was a member of the community of S. Eutizio, near Soriano, he was visited by some illness which rendered him unable to lift one of his arms. The Rector, seeing the gravity of the malady, thought it desirable to administer the holy Viaticum, which the humble religious received with all calmness and resignation. Immediately afterwards he rose from his bed completely cured, to the great wonder of those present who could only attribute this sudden recovery to some supernatural cause. Many other instances

might be added, but what has been already said is sufficient for the limits of this simple memorial.



CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH OF FR. JOHN THOMAS.

AT the end of his term of office as Rector of the Retreat of the Madonna del Cerro, the servant of God retired to S. Angelo, near Vetralla, where in retirement and tranquillity he sought to unite himself in holy charity more and more to the Supreme Good, when our holy Founder manifested his wish to make him Rector of the Retreat in which he had hoped to find refuge from the cares of office. Fr. John Thomas at first resisted humbly, alleging his insufficiency, but feeling himself constrained by holy obedience, he bent his shoulders to the burden of responsibility, predicting at the same time that God would provide for us, as happened in fact after three months. To Fr. Clement of St. Louis, who had come to S. Angelo to gain strength after a severe illness, he spoke in clearer terms. At their first meeting, he said as though in jest: "Perhaps you have come to select my grave;" for until then no burial had taken place in that Retreat. But afterwards, with greater seriousness, he added: "Do not doubt that I shall be the first to open the cemetery." And as he said, so it came about.

Assured of his approaching departure, as these facts seem to indicate, he gave himself

more than ever to the exercise of virtue and to the love of God with whom he was ever seeking closer union. At the same time our Lord added to his merit by inspiring him with an act of heroic charity. He was informed that a devout lady who was in danger of death would leave behind her a numerous family unprovided for. This was enough to suggest to him the offering to God of the sacrifice of his own life in exchange for that of this mother of a family. It seemed that our Lord accepted the offer; because after assuring the lady that she would not die—and twenty years after Fr. John Thomas' death she was still in the enjoyment of excellent health—the Father returned to the Retreat and was obliged that very evening to go to bed with malignant fever.

The religious speedily understood the gravity of the illness, and did not delay to bring all the necessary assistance. A doctor was called from Ronciglione, a friend of his, who sought to comfort the servant of God by telling him to be of good cheer, because he would be able to say Mass on Christmas day, to which however the Father replied that he would never celebrate again. "At least," rejoined the doctor, "Fr. Francis will say it"—referring to a religious who was ill with the same fever—"No," announced the sick man, "neither I nor Fr. Francis will ever say holy Mass again." The truth of the prediction was borne out by fact, for with only four days interval both the invalids rested in our Lord.

In the course of his very brief illness, Fr. John Thomas was always humble and obedient, without betraying the least sign of weariness or

irritation. When asked if he wished to receive the last Sacraments, he did not hesitate for a moment to reply with a cheerful and serene countenance: "Yes, very willingly." And when, shortly afterwards, they were administered, he received them in such an edifying manner that all the religious were greatly touched at his devotion. The priest who assisted him by suggesting devout ejaculations, said amongst other things: "Father Rector, keep yourself recollected in God," to which he immediately rejoined: "Yes, I am totally united with the Supreme Good." At last, while the priest was reciting these words of the Psalm, *Redimisti me Domine Deus veritatis*, Fr. John Thomas pressed against his breast the crucifix which he had held in his hands throughout his agony, and gave up his beautiful soul to the Creator very peacefully, with manifest signs of his predestination. This was on Friday, the 14th of December, 1759, an hour before the *Ave Maria*. He had lived nearly fifty-eight years. of which he had spent sixteen in the Congregation as a true son of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Sorely afflicted were the religious and all those who had known him, especially those who had experienced on so many occasions the beneficent effects of his charity, though this grief was duly tempered by the hope that he who died so full of merits was now their protector in heaven. It is related that after his happy passage he appeared to a devout person who had a great veneration for him, surrounded by heavenly light, encouraging her with gentle words as he had done during the last visit he paid her during his life.

The memorials give only a single instance of a cure effected by his intercession after his death, in the person of Don Angelo Parri, a priest of Piansano, uncle of the above-mentioned Signora Teresa Mazzarigi. Don Angelo was in danger of death from a severe attack of stone in the bladder when he sent for Fr. Anthony of Calvary, Rector of our Retreat near Toscanella. The Father was soon at the bedside of the sick man to whom he immediately gave a glass of water containing a minute fragment of the habit of Fr. John Thomas. After drinking the water, Don Angelo went to sleep and so remained all night and great part of the following morning, when he awoke perfectly cured and free from all pain. Small wonder if those about him attributed his sudden recovery to the miraculous interposition of the Almighty, who deigned thus to assure them of the merits of His servant.





Fr. Francis Anthony of the Crucified.

CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY EDUCATION AND CALL TO RELIGION.

THE subject of the present memoirs was born February 14th, 1719, at Rio in the island of Elba which at that time was under dominion of the princely house of Piombino. His parents, Giacinto Appiani and Clarice Claris, were both blessed with ample fortunes and were distinguished by their piety, religion and virtue. Francis Anthony was the sole issue of their union and as they were no longer young at the time of his birth, his advent was hailed with joy as that of an heir to whom they could safely leave their riches after he had been the prop of their declining years.

These flattering hopes, notwithstanding, God showed by unequivocal signs that His intentions were not those of the devout couple. As their child increased in years he displayed uncommon seriousness of mind, and a piety which was a source of general edification. He had also a tender compassion for the poor—the special char-

acteristic of his early years. He begged his mother to bestow upon them frequent alms, and not content with this, he would take the food which had been placed on the table for the family meals and distribute it to the hungry. These good dispositions were strengthened by a course of instruction at the hands of a tutor from whom he received the literary training customary at that time among youths of his station in life.

The temperament of the future Passionist seems to have been more than ordinary delicate. This, added to the care and comforts of a rich and well-ordered home, may perhaps account for the fact that as a youth he was dainty beyond reason—so excessive was his care that his clothes, furniture and everything he used should be of extreme cleanness and excellence, while in the matter of food he was exacting to the point of being almost impossible to please. His character, moreover, was hypochondriacal, and this tendency would sometimes develop so strongly as to threaten his life. All these circumstances enable us to form an idea of the mercy of God in respect to this soul, which, notwithstanding such adverse conditions, was enabled by grace to rise superior to them and finally to triumph over self.

Our holy Founder's visit to Elba in 1734 for the purpose of giving missions seems to have been the occasion reserved by Providence for awakening the heart of Francis Anthony. He was then only fifteen years old, but as he was much inclined to devotion he did not fail to go and hear the missionaries, who preached the truths of faith with such unusual fervor. Fortunate he, who so

quickly opened a passage for divine grace. As the sound of those penetrating voices fell upon his ear, there arose in his spirit a tempest of the affections. On the one hand, he was beginning, thanks to divine light, to understand the value of the soul and the meaning of eternity, the vanity of the world and the shortness of life; while on the other he felt himself strongly attached to the flatteries of the world, to the habits which he had formed, to the love of family and friends. Such in fact was the severity of the struggle that in a few days he was reduced to a pitiable condition. At length he summoned up courage to lay his case before our holy Founder who received him kindly and understanding the state of his soul, was persuaded that our Lord was calling the youth to Himself. And so exhorting him to courage, he bade him follow the voice of God.

Francis Anthony came away from the interview much consoled and more convinced than ever of the importance of the truths which had already gained a hold on his heart. He seems to have resolved then and there on a complete change of life. His rich clothes were laid aside as also the sword which he had hitherto worn conformably to the custom of the time among people of his rank. He began a course of penitential exercises, fasting, long continued prayer, and the use of a hair shirt, until our holy Founder, with whom he began corresponding after the mission, found it necessary to restrain him.

CHAPTER II.

DIFFICULTIES IN CORRESPONDING TO HIS VOCATION.

IT is no new thing when a young man, convinced of the vanities of the world, decides to abandon it and to serve God in the religious state, that gossip, sarcasm and reproof of all sorts should be levelled against him. And it often happens that the most determined opposition comes from pious and devout persons who sometimes imagine that the religious state has something dishonorable about it. So it was in the case of Francis Anthony. His father and mother, as soon as they knew of his intention, began to dissuade him by every means in their power; arguments, flattery and threats—all were brought into play. It was even suggested that he could not, without violating his conscience, abandon his home and parents; and at last they declared that nothing would induce them to give their consent.

About this time the lad's mother fell ill. The last Sacraments had been administered and her death was hourly expected, when one of those who stood by the bedside suggested to the dying woman that God was taking her from this life that she might no longer stand in the way of her son's entrance into religion. At these words she roused herself, expressed her sorrow for what she had done, and then asking God's pardon, declared her readiness to sanction her son's intention. She had scarcely finished speaking, when a sudden change was seen to come over her; and after a

few days she was restored to health. This unexpected change was, perhaps not unnaturally, regarded as a sign of the divine will.

Francis Anthony, at any rate, believed that the time had arrived for the fulfilment of his desire. Fresh opposition, however, was offered by his father, who, not content with assuring him that his vocation was not from God, sought to back his own argument with the authority of the Princess of Piombino and finally with that of the bishop.

Needless to say, these contradictions in themselves constituted a terrible ordeal, especially to a youth of Francis Anthony's temperament; nevertheless God saw fit still further to purify him with temptations of every kind. It is sufficient to read the letters which he wrote in the course of these years to our holy Founder, whom he kept informed of all, to understand the nature of the support which he found in St. Paul of the Cross, who constantly directed him in the midst of his difficulties and kept him firm in his purpose of obeying the call of God. As year followed year the young man began to languish when he saw that the only road by which he could hope to effect his intentions remained obstinately shut. At length, having reached the age of twenty-two years, he determined to avail himself of half measures which would at all events make it practically impossible for his parents to keep him at home. He resolved to enter the ecclesiastical state and then to take holy Orders. In this he had the happiness to succeed. Keeping the matter quiet until he had completed his arrangements, he left the house

secretly and withdrew to the city of Massa, the residence of the bishop. Here, far from contact with the world, he prepared with all fervor to make a sacrifice of himself to God, and the bishop, in view of his extraordinary good dispositions, made no difficulty in giving him the sub-diaconate. He then returned home, where everyone expected that his father would no longer refuse the desired permission. But the old man was thoroughly obstinate, and so remained until it pleased God to call him to another life, which happened not long after his son's ordination. But even after the removal of this obstacle, the fervent young man had to overcome still another before he was allowed to depart. It was necessary now to content his mother who refused to be satisfied unless she were allowed to be present when her son offered the holy Sacrifice for the first time. As a matter of fact the delay did no harm, because Francis Anthony wisely employed the interval in the study of moral theology. But although he had consented to his mother's wish, he would not permit any exterior pomp on the occasion of his first Mass, which he celebrated privately in the little Church of the Madonna della Pieta with great devotion.



CHAPTER III.

ENTERS THE CONGREGATION: HIS NOVITIATE
AND PROFESSION.

THE time so ardently longed for by Francis Anthony having at last arrived, he left his native place and reached Monte Argentaro during

the December of 1743, being then nearly twenty-five years of age. His appearance was the occasion of great joy to our holy Founder and to all the religious, who knowing the extraordinary obstacles which he had overcome before he could obey the divine call, hoped that he would prove a strong support to the young Congregation which at that time was tried by many difficulties that its very existence was threatened.

Nothing could have been more promising than the fervor with which he dedicated himself to the religious life. After spending a month of probation in fulfilling the humblest duties of the house, as prescribed by the Rules, he was unanimously admitted to receive the habit of the Congregation when he assumed the name of Francis Anthony of the Crucified, as though to signalize the realization of his intention to become a faithful copy of that divine model. We may well imagine how hard and painful this new kind of life must have been to him, and the virtues of which he had need in order to adapt himself to it. The Rules, although approved by the Holy See, had not yet been mitigated, while in those early days of the Congregation necessities were often wanting. Nevertheless the novice remained firm in his purpose, and having overcome all his trials with great fervor, was happy when the time arrived when he could be admitted to profession.

On this occasion he made an offering of himself to our Lord Jesus Christ, which he wrote with his own hand on paper, using his own blood in place of ink. We will here reproduce it in full:

“I, Francis Anthony of the Crucified, most

unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Passion, to Thee, O Jesus, by these presents written by my own hand, make an irrevocable donation of my soul, my heart and of my whole being. I offer to Thee these eyes of mine, and I pray Thee by Thy merits and by Thy most holy Passion and death, and by the affection Thou bearest the most holy Virgin and well beloved Mother to deign to keep them, that they may no longer delight in, or care to behold the vanities of this world. I offer Thee my ears, and beg Thee to keep them to the end that they may no longer take pleasure in songs, sounds and discourses which are not of Thee and do not regard Thee. I offer Thee my tongue, and beg Thee to keep it well restrained, so that it may never break forth into vain and useless discourses, but speak only of Thee, of Thy love and of Thy glory. I offer Thee this sense of smell, do Thou keep it, that it may take no delight in pleasant perfumes. I offer Thee my body and my whole being. My Jesus, I offer Thee memory, intellect and will: let me think only of Thee; let me long for nothing but Thee; let me desire nothing but Thee; let me not live except for Thee, and outside of Thee let me find and suffer only thorns, tribulations, bitterness and poison. My Jesus, I firmly propose by Thy help to die a thousand times rather than offend Thee, even slightly with voluntary consent. Let me die if Thou foreseest that I will be unfaithful or that I shall not love Thee with all my heart. I propose by Thy help and assistance to love Thee and serve Thee till my last breath, and I wish Thee to let me be burned to death. . . . Have pity on me by the merits of

Thy most bitter Passion. May the most holy Immaculate Virgin, my Lady, my Angel guardian, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, my advocates and protectors for this year be witnesses of all that is herein contained, and of this offering; and in faith of this I subscribe myself with my own hand. Jesus, Maria. Francis Anthony of the Crucified. . . . *Laus Deo, Beatæ Mariæ Virgini sine labe conceptæ, et omnibus Sanctis. Amen."*



CHAPTER IV.

HIS FERVOR OF SPIRIT.

FROM the day he set foot in the Monastery, Fr. Francis Anthony understood the spirit of our Institute, viz: to make continual remembrance of, and mourning for the Passion of Jesus Christ; and it was very soon evident that he had set himself to reproduce the spirit in his own person. Realizing more truly each day the magnitude of Christ's sufferings, he seemed to have become like a son inconsolable for the loss of his father, to whose memory he wishes to sacrifice himself and his all. Hence his delight in prayer, which in his case may be said to have been continual; his total detachment from all earthly affections; his desire to mortify himself in everything, and lastly, his insatiable thirst for fresh methods of pleasing his beloved Good, so that constant restraint was necessary to prevent him from burdening himself with too many obligations in the shape of devout exercises.

Soon after his profession he bound himself to God with two vows which he took before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, with the consent of his spiritual father, Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus. The first was to persevere in the Congregation until death, which vow he confirmed with special oath of perseverance; the second was, never to ask, directly or indirectly, dispensation from the vow or from the oath. Both these vows he renewed afterwards at the Retreat of S. Angelo near Vetralla, with the approval of Fr. Marcus Aurelius, adding to the first the following clause: "Even though the Congregation should come to be an Order with solemn vows," for the reason that the Rules having been newly submitted to the Holy See, it was thought perhaps that solemn vows would be approved. To the second vow he added that his intention was to bind himself not to ask for dispensation under any pretext whatever, even at the cost of his life.

In pursuance of the same ardent desire to do that which should be pleasing to God, he bound himself by another vow never again to set foot in his native place. He had been obliged to visit Elba on the occasion of his mother's death, to put her affairs in order. Scarcely had he accomplished this duty when he set out to return to his beloved solitude on Monte Argentaro. On his arrival, with the permission of Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus, he made the aforesaid vow which he wrote out on paper in the following terms:

"With permission and licence, etc., this Friday, the fourth day of May, 1753, having considered and understood in this the greater pleasure

of God, aided by divine grace, before the altar of the Most Holy, I have made a vow never more to go to the Island of Elba, so long as I live for any purpose whatever, no matter how great its importance, or for reasons of health, even though I should die."

Such resolutions on the part of Fr. Francis Anthony are not to be taken as indicating attachment to his own judgment, or a capricious sanctity, because his spirit was quite of another temper, as we shall have occasion to see later. His readiness to bind himself by vows and resolutions appears to have its sole cause in his ardent desire to please God more and more and to unite himself to Him. It must be noted, too, that he did all these things with the counsel of others, and if he were advised of the shadow of anything contrary to obedience in any of these proposals, he at once laid them aside. Among other written purposes, he formed one never to put on a new habit, but on the same paper he added that if he could not obtain an old one after the first remonstrance, he must be satisfied with what was given him.

Not only from the memorials but from various papers written in his own hand which Fr. Francis Anthony left behind him, we learn that he bound himself to an infinity of pious practices, devout exercises, and works of mortification and penance. The wonder is that he could ever find time to comply with these obligations as well as the religious observances of the Congregation. But ceaselessly urged by fervor, he found time and means to satisfy them all, and that with singular diligence, attention and constancy. He seems however to

have found them an embarrassment when duty took him from home, and he therefore submitted his difficulty to our holy Founder, who after due consideration gave his approval to these pious obligations on the understanding that Fr. Francis Anthony should lay them aside absolutely without a shadow of displeasure or disturbance, whenever he was called outside the Retreat to exercise his ministry or on other matters of obedience. The humble religious was so pleased with this judgment that he immediately wrote it out on paper to keep it ever present to his memory.

But his fervor in piety and devotion will become even more manifest when we consider the interior trials of his spirit. If he had had an uninterrupted experience of sweetnesses and delights then indeed his constant fervor and pleasure in these devout exercises would have been no great matter. But it was exactly the contrary. Because God had destined him to be a very precious stone in the heavenly Jerusalem. He willed not to exempt him from the necessary ordeal of tribulation and suffering.

All those religious who had the direction of his soul attest that he was almost always subject to an aridity of spirit which defied expression, so that he was obliged to force himself to spiritual exercises with great violence. And when to this habitual dryness of spirit is added his naturally hypochondriacal character, we may gather some idea of the virtue he was obliged to exercise in order to persevere. His habit of transcribing and annotating texts of Scripture for the nourishment of his soul, and to serve as an encouragement to

kiss the hand which lovingly smote him, furnish additional proof of such efforts. *Speciosa misericordia ejus in tempore tribulationis in luce sagittarum tuarum ibunt.*—(Abac. 3,) he transcribes with the following commentary: Tribulations not only cleans but enlightens. *Qui non est tentatus quid scit?* He afterwards proceeds: “We ought to suffer like Christians; *Nemo moveatur in tribulationibus istis, ipsi enim scitis, quod in hoc positi simus.*—(Thess. 33.) Just as baptism makes us faithful in profession, suffering makes us faithful in fact: *in hoc positi sumus.*” And elsewhere he writes: “*Replevit me Dominus amaritudinibus, inebriavit me absinthio:* and what comes of it? *Pars mea Dominus, dixit anima mea:* the Lord shall be my part: my soul shall possess Him. Oh blessed pain if so it be! O most fortunate he who suffers!” Brief as these instances may be, they suffice to demonstrate that his piety and devotion were full of those characteristics which denote the presence of virtues really inward, true and solid.



CHAPTER V.

HIS MORTIFICATION.

THE Rule of our Congregation, especially in those early days, was sufficiently hard, austere and adapted to satisfy the inclinations and desires of any soul inclined to penance and mortification. Nevertheless it seemed little to the spirit of Fr. Francis Anthony, so greatly was he

inflamed by fervor and urged by the stimulus of divine charity.

For this reason from the very beginning of his religious career he waged ceaseless war against himself and continually sought fresh methods of mortification so that he might be more acceptable to his beloved Good, who for love of us submitted to suffer and die upon a Cross. The Rule as practised at that time prescribed a common and daily fast for all the religious; but the servant of God increased its severity to such an extent that his companions wondered how he could maintain life on so little and preserve a comparatively healthy appearance at the same time; for though he was not corpulent he was by no means emaciated. Moreover, he made it a rule to leave on his plate the morsels which pleased him most, and to eat those which were the least appetizing; it was also his custom never to use salt with his food except in cases of special necessity; not to drink more than six times a day and then only at table; never to eat delicate fruit save on festivals or on some other unforeseen occasion when abstinence would have seemed singular.

So intent was he on the mortification of his appetite that he let slip no opportunity of putting his resolution into practice. It is related, among other things, that having to go out one morning very early, he went into the kitchen for a piece of bread; and finding that the fresh loaves were at that moment being taken from the oven, he chose one which had been specially made with bran for the dog, saying that it was the best. On another occasion, also, when he was giving a course of

spiritual exercises in a Monastery, the nuns prepared for him dishes suitable for a man suffering from indigestion, for they knew he was thus afflicted. But their solicitude was in vain; he refused to touch anything but coarse and ordinary food which they were obliged then to set before him.

Among the papers written with his own hand are many resolutions which make known to us other mortifications with which he used to crucify his flesh. In one of these papers he writes: "In addition to the community disciplines, I will twice every month discipline myself to blood for the space of a *Miserere*, *De Profundis* and the antiphon *Sancta Maria Succerre*, etc.; with the proper prayer. I will do the same on the vigil of Corpus Domini, adding the *Pange Lingua* and the collect; likewise on the vigil of Pentecost, adding the *Veni Creator*, and its proper prayer. I will do the same on the last Thursday of the Carnival, for the conversion of sinners: on all the Fridays of March, adding the prayer, *Deus qui pro redemptione mundi*, etc. Finally, I will do the same on Good Friday."

Besides this he often wore a *catanella* and tormented his body in various other ways. And he would have done more had he been able to obtain the consent of his directors. However, he found expedients by which to compensate himself for their refusals. as is evident from other little documents found among his papers. In one of these we read: "In sitting, I will not lean against anything, except for the purpose of study, or in case of extraordinary weariness." And elsewhere: "I will sleep sitting on the mattress, except when I

am ill." But to avoid undue prolixity, it will be well to give one of these papers in which Fr. Francis Anthony appears to sum up all his ordinary mortifications. It runs as follows:

"*Sustine et abstine*—Endure and abstain. For the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: As to my eyes, endure the inconvenience of sleepiness; two hours of repose in the morning are sufficient. Olio, etc. (The explanation of the 'et cetera' is given on another piece of paper in which he refers to a resolution he made to let two drops of oil fall in his eyes in reparation for the immodesties committed in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.) Abstain from objects and sights which afford satisfaction of any kind: *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*. As to my ears, endure words of mortification, reproofs, noises, etc. Abstain from songs, music, news, curiosity, and praise of self. As to the sense of taste, endure nausea of the stomach, want of appetite; dishes which you do not like; coarseness of food and bad cooking; scarcity of food and wine; the annoyance of something bitter on the tongue on Fridays, and, on other occasions, of having to take sweet things to avoid singularity. Abstain from fruits, sweets, and all things more especially pleasing to nature. As to the sense of smell, endure unpleasant odors of all kinds. Abstain from all kinds of pleasant odors under whatever pretext or necessity, even in illness. Finally, as to the sense of touch, endure afflictions, illnesses, changes of the weather, heat, cold, dejection, etc. Abstain from comforts, and from touches or other acts to rid myself of annoying insects." He concludes

this document as follows: "*Sine me nihil potestis facere, et cum faceritis haec omnia dicite: servi inutiles sumus.*" All approved by the spiritual Father, except that when during illness the Infirmarian gives me something to smell, I will accept it, but only in such a case. These resolutions have been taken in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and offered to the same."

The reader will certainly not doubt that this blessed Father had pledged himself to copy in his own person the image of Jesus Christ Crucified.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS DOCILITY AND SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE.

FATHER Francis Anthony well understood that bodily mortification, unless it be accompanied by mortification of the spirit, is of little value; for which reason he applied himself to gain perfection in the latter no less than in the former. All those who were his companions, both when he was superior and when he was a simple religious, attest that his self-abnegation was such that he seemed to possess neither judgment nor will of his own. It is related that once when he was at Monte Argentaro discharging his office as Visitor-General, he pointed out some imperfection in the arrangement of the flowers on the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. The sacristan allowed himself to expostulate, whereupon the Visitor, with-

out the least sign of disturbance, said: "Yes; you say well," and seemed perfectly satisfied.

Such was his simplicity and subjection that he readily believed everything that was said to him, especially if it came from the lips of a superior. Whence, however anxious he was to make acts of mortification, as soon as he was aware that his superior disapproved, he would persuade himself it was better to leave them undone. With him it was an inviolable maxim that in superiors we must recognize the person of God; therefore when he had occasion to write to the Father General he used to do so on his knees; and in the same way he was accustomed to kneel when he opened and read any letter from the same superior.

If it happened in the course of conversation with others that anything he said was not approved, he was not in the least put out, nor did he show the least sign of displeasure. In one of his notes he wrote: "I must accomodate myself to the opinion of others in all matters of doctrine, so long as they be not opposed to our Lord's will; as also in the pronounciation of words, esteeming myself an ass, as I am in truth; in fact, to make a rag of my own will."

And in this matter of tramping under foot his own will and judgment, he was so scrupulous that among his papers written in his own hand, were found such remarks as: "Obedience to all," and "Obedience in all things." A simple hint from his superior was sufficient to make him do anything, or leave it undone. His great delight in prayer had caused him to forego the repose appointed by the Rule after midnight office, but his

superior having once remarked that it would be sufficient if he rose half an hour before the community, he at once adopted the suggestion.

When he entered the Congregation as a priest he had only studied moral theology. After his profession, therefore, he applied himself to dogma: but because he was often employed in ministerial and other duties, he found it difficult to pursue his studies to any purpose. It is not surprising that a man of his temperament should see in this a reason to fear that he was imperfectly equipped for the duties of a missionary, and that he should lay his doubt before his superior. The Rector simply replied that he must do his best with regard to study, and with this answer he was so content that he immediately wrote on paper the following note: "God has told me by the mouth of His minister, Fr. Bernardine, Rector of this Retreat, that not to know well the whole of dogmatic theology, or to be unable to study it because of other occupations, is not a sin; in fact he recommends blind obedience in all things."

As we may naturally suppose, a man so distrustful of his own powers looked upon himself as unfit for any office, especially that of superior. One of his resolutions, theretore, was never to accept responsibilities of this kind, to which he added in writing the doctrine of the Capuchin Father, Gaetano da Bergamo: "That if a soul is damned through any fault of commission or omission of its superior, this is sufficient to damn the superior himself," ending with a sentiment of his own, to the effect that he did not feel himself obliged to accept offices, even if commanded, be-

cause he knew his inaptitude by experience. But that this resolution was dictated only by his humility appears from another subsequently made and similarly recorded in writing. In future, as a matter of fact, he never remonstrated with regard to any office or obedience thrust upon him. As he wrote: "I purpose to obey in all things, even at the cost of life itself, whether for confessions, missions or any office whatsoever, or superiority of any kind, without the least reply or excuse of inability." Here we have further illustration of his humility which was united to a complete submission to the wishes of God, when recognized.

The subjection of mind and heart to holy obedience was the directing rule of his conduct, as proved by the various sentiments on this subject, set down in his notes and memoranda. In one we read: "Religion does not require that we succeed as a doctor or famous preacher, but as an excellent religious and truly obedient." But not to be prolix, let us end this chapter with an extract from a letter which he wrote to one of our religious who was much troubled because he had been elected superior: "I rejoice with your Reverence," he writes, "because of the new office which God has placed upon your shoulders; I rejoice when I think of the merit which you will gain by supporting this responsibility. In the divine will, you teach me that the holy, the perfect and the best are contained; who, therefore, perfectly fulfils the same, he is holy, he is best, he is perfect, etc." The letter continues in this strain, attesting the writer's spirit of docility, submission and obedience.

CHAPTER VII.

HIS HUMILITY.

AFTER what has been said there is certainly no need to offer much proof to convince the reader of Fr. Francis Anthony's humility. Among the maxims which before all others he bore imprinted on his heart was this: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*; and we have seen how solicitous he was to keep himself out of sight and to make himself esteemed as good for nothing. The greater part of his religious life was passed in filling various offices, for he was elected local superior several times and was afterwards employed as Secretary General to our holy Founder. At the same time he never displayed the least vanity, nor did he give any one occasion to think that he believed himself capable or superior to others, much less did he make any claim to exemptions, distinctions and privileges.

His conviction of his own nothingness, and his consequent indifference as to the esteem in which he was held by others, as well as his satisfaction when he was passed over, were evident at a glance. When, for instance, he was present at a conversation on some subject with which he was well acquainted, he would merely listen in silence, as though he knew nothing of it. He was careful, moreover, never to utter words which, directly or indirectly, might redound to his own praise; and he was equally attentive not to censure himself, lest those who heard him should think him humble. As a youth he had learned to

play the violin, which he did extremely well, but from the moment of his entrance into the Congregation, he did not even speak of it. Similarly, he was never heard to allude to his home or parents.

His habit of binding himself to the performance of a number of devotional exercises has been already mentioned, together with his strong attachment to them. Nevertheless, if he suspected that these practices were noticed by others, he preferred to omit them rather than incur the possible risk of vainglory. He would not even ask others to pray for him, lest they should suspect him of humility in so doing. One of our religious used to relate that on his first arrival at Monte Argentaro as a postulant, he had hardly set foot in the Retreat when he met F. Francis Anthony, wearing a very old and much patched habit. The Father, having asked the stranger his business, and hearing that he wished to see the superior, at once volunteered to go in search of him; and as a matter of fact he went and told the Master of Novices, although he himself was actually Rector of the Retreat.

As we shall describe more particularly in another place, this holy religious, in a document written with his own blood in place of ink, made an oblation of himself to the Blessed Virgin. Now because he feared that it might fall into the hands of others, he wrote all over the outside of it: "Let no one presume to open this paper." During his last illness, when he saw that death was near, he asked for all the papers in the drawer of his writing-table that he might commit them to the flames. But God, who willed the preservation

of these edifying memorials, disposed that the doctor should assure him that there was no danger for the time being, whereupon the invalid's anxiety was allayed. Later, becoming rapidly worse, he lost the power of speech, consequently his intention of hiding his private notes from other eyes was frustrated, and by the ordering of Divine Providence they remained to attest his sincere humility.



CHAPTER VIII.

VIRTUES EXERCISED FOR THE GOOD OF HIS NEIGHBOR.

SCARCELY three years after his profession, Fr. Francis Anthony was appointed to the office of Rector which he filled more than once. He was also elected Provincial Consultor and was finally chosen by our holy Founder to be Secretary General, in which office he died. The duties attached to all these employments served wonderfully to bring out and accentuate the virtues of this man of God. Placed in circumstances which necessitated frequent contact with all classes of people, with whom he had to discuss business and affairs of various kinds, he was obliged to do violence to his natural inclinations, which, as we know, led him in the direction of retirement. Yet so successful were his efforts to maintain an affable manner and smiling countenance, that everyone imagined him to be naturally cheerful. Those, however, who knew the secrets of his soul, were

aware what this constant effort—the effect of self-control—must have cost him.

Among his papers he left the two following resolutions: “1. To preserve equanimity under all circumstances, whether in aridity or prosperity, as recommended by St. Francis de Sales. 2. A cheerful countenance and an amiable manner—give pleasure to all, whether religious or seculars who are thus encouraged to open their minds more easily.” And so it happened in reality; everyone loved him and confided in him.

In the matter of the temporal necessities of his brethren, there was nothing which he did not do his best to obtain for them, so long as regular observance was not in any way prejudiced. When they were ill, he showed himself a true father, sparing neither expense, inconvenience or fatigue that he might help and comfort them as their condition might permit; day and night he was the first to visit them, and if necessary he would feed them with his own hand. As was said after his death, no one who lived with him as a companion or under him as a subject had ever reason to complain of Fr. Francis Anthony.

It must not be imagined, on this account, that he closed his eyes to the shortcomings of his subjects. Most careful in his observance of the minutest prescriptions of the Rule, he was not less exacting in securing a similar compliance from others. Never did he omit to correct delinquents when occasion demanded. One Autumn, when he was Rector of the Retreat of S. Angelo, the Father Vicar thought it well to use the produce of some vines which were cultivated in the

garden, to make a little wine. The fact in due course came under the notice of Fr. Francis Anthony, who insisted that the wine should be given to the poor.

It happened on another occasion the Brother cook, aware that he suffered from want of appetite, and thinking to tempt him to eat, put into the community salad a little garlic, for which he knew his superior had a certain liking. Unhappy Brother! As soon as Fr. Francis Anthony understood what had been done, he called upon him to confess his fault in the public refectory, where, as Rector, he administered a severe rebuke, adding—as he threw away the garlic—that he was opposed to singularity of any kind; so jealous was he of the observance of the holy Rules which prescribe common life. However, in this and in similar cases when the duty of his office compelled him to reprove anyone, he did so with such gentleness and discretion that those who had been in fault, so far from being cast down or disturbed felt themselves newly encouraged to persevere in their vocation with all diligence and fidelity. A witness who had lived with him a long time declared that Fr. Francis Anthony's only distinction as a superior was to be punctual before all the rest in the observance of the holy Rules and in the exercise of the most heroic virtues.

In providing for the spiritual benefit of his subjects the servant of God took no thought of time or inconvenience. He was ready at all times to listen to those who desired to consult him, and on this head he did not fail according to his custom to make resolutions which we will repro-

duce here just as they were found among his papers: "In the first place, when anyone comes to consult me on the affairs of his soul, to let him speak and never to interrupt. Not to assign a pre-arranged or limited time for confessions, nor to restrict their frequency, except in the case of the scrupulous. Not to manifest oneself to a penitent by saying that I suffer from the same temptations, because this is apt to reawaken temptation in him who is listening to me. Not to consent to act as extraordinary confessor without strong reasons. To avoid making difficulties for persons troubled with extreme scrupulosity and fear. Never to give hesitating or ambiguous answers, but to act frankly—for the hand of a good surgeon must not tremble. If the spiritual father shows that he is scrupulous, his words are apt to be as poison instead of medicine. Not to ask many questions, which tire, vex, and result in fresh fears and apprehensions. Not to give many reasons in persuading a person, because sometimes blind obedience is a most convincing reason."

The above quotation has been made that the reader may understand how careful he was about exercising his ministry fruitfully. His success was wonderful, as we learn from the testimony of those who, having had the happiness to be directed by him, declared that he was truly singular in his aptitude for calming agitated consciences. Similar evidence was given by nuns of all the Monasteries where Fr. Francis Anthony had given the spiritual exercises.

His pleasant and affable manner, and his con-

stant readiness to answer every call upon him without showing the least sign of weariness, contributed not a little to his success. His zeal for the salvation of souls rendered him insensible to fatigue in missionary work and other labors wherein he made himself all things to all men.

The effect of his unwearied application and affability with all who came to him was seen in the numerous conversions of obstinate sinners which God brought about through his instrumentality. A certain parish priest related that he had tried by every means in his power, but in vain, to extinguish certain bad practices which disgraced one of the houses in his district. Fortunately, Fr. Francis Anthony was sent to give a mission in the parish, and the scandal in question was brought to his notice by the pastor. This was sufficient. The mother of the unhappy girls implicated in the affair went to confession to the missionary whose efforts to win her over to a right course of conduct were crowned with success, and the scandal soon ceased to trouble the country side. On another occasion, his serious demeanor had an instantaneous effect upon a person who was making his confession with unseemly levity, causing the penitent to enter into himself and so to shed tears of contrition for his sins.

Not less solicitous was his charity towards the poor to whom, when still in the world, he had always been kind and considerate. As a religious his compassion for them was redoubled; and while he was superior he never allowed any poor person to be sent away from the Retreat unassisted by alms. Thus, after his death, as they

mourned his loss, they were loud in their praises of his inexhaustible charity.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS DEVOTION TO OUR LADY.

THE devotion of Fr. Francis Anthony toward the most holy Queen of Heaven was so extraordinary that we think it well to devote a special chapter to its consideration. From the moment he joined the Congregation he dedicated himself to her as her slave with the firm purpose that he would always look upon her as his mistress. Not content with this, after some years, in order to fix his promise still more firmly in his mind, he wrote it out on paper with his blood. For the edification of the reader we give it here in full.

“Twenty-fourth day of March, 1747. Behold prostrate at thy most holy feet, O great Virgin Immaculate, Mother of God, the miserable sinner, Francis Anthony of the Crucified, most unworthy priest, who acknowledging the grave affront committed against thy Most Holy Son, and also against thee, is sorry for everything and implores your all but infinite mercy to obtain pardon for him. My dearest Lady, grant that I, who thanks to thy pity, am not now burning in hell, and who have received from thee so many particular graces and favors, may make to thee a perpetual, irrevocable oblation of myself. I there-

fore dedicate myself, and protest myself, now and forever, at thy most holy feet, thy slave and servant, however unworthy. I offer thee, O my sovereign Lady, my heart and my whole self. I dare not call thee by the sweet name of mother, because I have not behaved towards thee as a son. Lady, I offer thee in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, my eyes, do thou keep them, that they may no longer care to look upon the vain objects of the world. I offer thee my ears, guard them that they may no longer take pleasure in harmonies, worldly music, vain tales, or discourses about earthly things. I offer thee all my senses: I give them over and consecrate them to thee. I offer thee my heart, and I give it and consecrate it, after Jesus, to thee: inflame it completely with thy love, and if thou foreseest that I shall be ungrateful, change it or make me die the sooner. I desire thy love that I may love Jesus, and the love of Jesus that I may love thee: Wilt thou deny it me? I ask thee no reward in this life. Lady, sanctify thy poor slave by the most bitter Passion of Jesus. Give me a profound humility, hatred of myself, love of suffering: let me live forgotten and unknown, despised by the world. Most Holy Mary, I am thy slave: such I protest myself in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity. Amen, Amen. Witness all herein contained Jesus Crucified and my Angel Guardian, Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Discalced Clerk of the Passion of Jesus Christ."

How sincere and resolute he was in this dedication of himself to Mary most holy appears from the acts of worship and mortification he practiced

all his life in her honor. Among his papers we find a rule which he wrote to serve as a method for four novenas in preparation for certain festivals of the Madonna to which he had a special devotion. In it he says: "In honor of the most holy Madonna I will make four novenas in the year before her four solemnities, viz: her Conception, Nativity, Annunciation and Assumption. All the other festivals of the Madonna which are observed with an office throughout the universal Church, I will prepare for by a triduum. During these novenas and triduums this shall be the order: to recite each day the little Office of our Lady, to wear every morning the usual *catanella*, every morning besides to chew absinthe, and to fast strictly every day. The discipline to blood which I am bound to take twice a month I will arrange to coincide with the vigil of the festival. I will offer all the prayers and acts of virtue of those days in honor of the Madonna. I will try by God's grace to be more exact in the matter of obedience, and to imitate the most holy Virgin in virtue, especially in purity and humility. On these days also I will make my spiritual reading from some book which treats of the Madonna."

Now in preparation for the feast of the Assumption he was accustomed to add a special Lent, which began on the day after the feast of SS. Peter and Paul; which Lent consisted in the daily observance of a strict fast, except on festivals, and in the daily recitation of the *Ave Maris Stella*, with other prayers; and four days a week the chewing of absinthe, and these practices he

repeated every day until the beginning of the novena, during which he took the discipline three times to blood.

His resolutions also included the recitation of the Little Office of our Lady on every feast of precept, and on all those of the Blessed Virgin, the vigils of which he observed with the same mortifications as noted above. These, as appears from another note in his handwriting, he repeated every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday throughout the year. We learn, lastly, from another document that of the free Masses (one each week) allowed by the Rule to every priest, he in the course of a year applied thirty-six in honor of Mary Most Holy with these intentions: Eleven to thank God for the graces imparted to her in the order of nature; fourteen for those imparted to her in the order of grace; and eleven for those in the order of glory.

No more need be said to indicate the extraordinary devotion of Fr. Francis Anthony toward the Mother of God, nor can we doubt that this most loving mother in return blessed him with gifts and special favors by means of which he succeeded in reaching a very high degree of perfection.



CHAPTER X.

HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

FATHER Francis Anthony had lived sixteen years in the Congregation in the exercise of the most heroic virtue, when our most merciful

Lord, to crown the graces with which he had endowed His faithful servant, deigned to warn him that the hour was approaching for him to receive the reward of his labors. Toward the end of November, 1759, the Father was living in the Retreat of S. Angelo, near Vetralla, engaged in his duties as Secretary General to our holy Founder, when he was suddenly taken ill with fever, although not seriously. Notwithstanding his intimate conviction that he would die of this illness, he wished to learn the doctor's opinion, because in his deep humility he never trusted himself; and this principally for the reason that he wished before dying to commit all his writings to the flames. However, when the doctor came and had examined the patient, he found no cause for anxiety, and he accordingly told the sick man to be tranquil, because for the moment there was no fear of death.

But although he consented not to take any steps to carry out his determination to burn his papers, he seemed anything but convinced. He immediately took his pen and wrote a letter to our holy Founder in which he asked his forgiveness, thanked him for the charity with which he had always treated him, and begged his fatherly blessing for the last time, because in a short time he must quit this life. This letter is not extant, but the memorials tell us that our holy Father related the fact in the presence of several religious, with the remark, "To tell the truth I did not believe it, because the illness was only a little fever."

However, the fever becoming suddenly more violent, obliged him to take to his bed, from which

he was to rise no more. During this time—a period of about twenty days—his cell became a school of the most sublime virtues; and it was certainly a great edification to notice that not even in that last illness would he accept the little comforts which, while he was superior, he had been so anxious to obtain for his subjects. Resigned and firm in the will of God, he met every pain in a generous spirit without a word of complaint or impatience, and always with a cheerful countenance. In the three last days the illness took on all the symptoms of approaching death. His convulsions were so terribly vehement, that he seemed to beat the bed with all his limbs. Seeing this, the infirmarian said firmly: “Father Secretary, keep still a little;” and it was wonderful to see how the sick man immediately calmed down. At other times the infirmarian would say: “Try to extend your arms in the form of a cross,” and the invalid would at once obey. At another: “Open your eyes a little;” and notwithstanding the pain he was passing through, would do so, making signs with smiles that he would answer, only that he was incapable of further speech.

Last of all it seems that the most pitying mother of mercies deigned to come down and visit her servant before his death, to give him a token of approbation for the service so faithfully rendered her until that moment. Suddenly, while his pains were at their worst, he was seen to raise his eyes to heaven, with a serene countenance, all joyful as it had never been seen before; then, making an effort to uncover his head, he began to make signs of affection and adoration. Those

who stood by were fain to see in this the effect of some heavenly vision, more especially a visit of the Mother of God, deigned to reward his great devotion to her, and to comfort him in the midst of his sufferings by inviting him to accompany her to receive his reward in the glory of the saints.

Soon afterwards, with the assistance of his religious brethren, who were all praying around his bed, the servant of God breathed forth his blessed soul on the evening of December the 18th, the day dedicated to the memory of the Expectation of Most Holy Mary, thus closing his days on a festival sacred to her whom he had loved and venerated so much, and by whom he had been so blessed and protected.

There is no need to tell how the religious deplored his loss, as that of a subject worthy of all love and esteem for his virtues and excellent qualities. More than all, our holy Founder, mourned him, continuing to do so for many years every time he was reminded of him. His ordinary eulogy was this: "Father Francis Anthony was a man of holy life; he was a Saint." After the funeral obsequies, the body was deposited in the burial place of the community, but in a separate place. In this way his brethren wished to give him a last token of affection and gratitude for the luminous example which he had left them as a precious inheritance.





Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus.

Afterwards Monsignor Struzzieri.

CHAPTER I.

HIS NATIVE PLACE: HIS YOUTH: HE GOES TO ROME
FOR HIS EDUCATION.

ONE of the strongest supports which the most merciful God gave our holy Father, St. Paul of the Cross, in his great work of founding our Congregation was Father Thomas of the Side of Jesus. Because not only did he help our holy Founder with his advise and with his work to overcome the serious difficulties which stood in the way, but he became so conspicuous by his rare virtues as to draw upon himself the admiration of all who knew him; whence he was considered worthy to be raised to the dignity of a Bishop, which fact added considerably to the honor of the new Institute. Leaving to some more highly gifted pen the task of describing more in detail the life of this man to whom the Congregation owes much esteem and gratitude, we will content ourselves with taking from the writings which remain to us certain facts which may suffice to give some idea, so far as may be possible, of Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus, and of the examples of virtue which he has left us.

Our Thomas, then, was born of Innocent Struzzieri and Santa Mancinelli in the city of Sinigaglia. The characteristic which distinguished these parents was not so much their easy and comfortable position, but rather the piety and fear of God with which they were adorned; for which it seemed that Divine Providence wished to reward them by giving them this son, who was destined to be the glory not only of their house but of the Church at large. It is worthy of mention that our Thomas's birthday fell on Holy Tuesday the 30th of March, 1706, and that he came into the world at the very moment when the Passion of St. Mark was being sung in the Cathedral, as though our Lord wished to give a presage of the special devotion which one day this child would entertain toward so great a mystery; of the Institute to which he would consecrate himself; and of the manner in which he would become a loud-sounding trumpet, destined to publish to the world Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

In baptism, which was given to him the same day, he received the name of Thomas Anthony Fabritius. As would naturally be the case with such excellent people, his parents were careful to bring him up devoutly and to have him taught the rudiments of such knowledge as was proper to his tender years. But although the child showed excellent dispositions in corresponding to this parental solicitude, so extraordinary, nevertheless, was the liveliness and animation of his nature, that unfortunately, he was sometimes betrayed into little acts of giddiness, a defect quickly

repaired by divine grace when he put himself under the direction of a Father of the Oratory of St. Philip, a man of great learning, experience and virtue.

The boy was then about twelve years old, and it may be said that his future goodness had its beginning at this time. The salutary effects of this guidance showed themselves in a very remarkable change of conduct. From that time he became very devout in Church, diligent in his attendance at the services, exceedingly respectful to his parents, much given to frequenting the Sacraments and to devout practices in such a way as to become the mirror and example of all boys of his age. Remembering this afterwards not without a certain satisfaction, he used to say: "That Father made me turn my brains to some account."

His father, who was all eyes in watching the development of his son, seeing this singular change, and how, in his studies, the boy gave promise of no ordinary kind, began to think of placing him in some house of education where he might direct his lessons and perfect himself to some good end. His choice fell upon the Collegio Nazzarenc in Rome, to which he at once made application that his boy might be received. On the arrival of a favorable reply, Thomas was accordingly sent thither, and on the 25th of November, 1719, at the age of thirteen, set foot in the college, where after examination he was placed in the second class of grammar. Nor were the hopes formed of him destined to disappointment, for in the records of that college it was written that in

piety and devotion he became a perfect model to all the other students, while in knowledge he surpassed many, especially in poetry, of which he was a master.



CHAPTER II.

ASSUMES THE ECCLESIASTICAL HABIT AND IS
ORDAINED: CELEBRATES HIS FIRST MASS
AND BEGINS TO PREACH.

YOUNG Thomas remained seven years in the Collegio Nazzareno, closing his course of study there by defending a thesis in public which he dedicated to Pope Benedict XIII. Having done this with great applause, his mind began to be occupied with the choice of his future state; and from the resolution which he took it is easy to see what ripeness of judgment and foresight he brought to bear on an affair of such importance. Although a man of his gifts and talents might justly have looked forward to an honorable career in the world, he was already persuaded that everything would be in vain unless those favors were directed to the honor and glory of the Lord to whom he owed them. For this reason he decided to adopt the ecclesiastical state, and as soon as he had left college to assume its habit and receive minor Orders; and further to apply himself to the study of theology in order to prepare himself for the priesthood. Before very long he was considered to be sufficiently prepared, and he had the happiness of receiving all the major Orders,

at the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIII, who thought fit to dispense him that he might be raised to the priesthood at the age of twenty-three years and nine months, slightly in advance of the canonical age. We are without particulars as to the circumstances which attended the celebration of his first Mass, but we can imagine much when we remember the blamelessness of his conduct, which for many years had made him a model for the imitation of his fellow students. This much we know, his father's content was so great that in gratitude to God he distributed generous alms to the poor of Sinigaglia.

Having celebrated his first Mass in Rome, Fr. Thomas, always ready to fall in with the wishes of his father, took up the study of law, in which he made such progress that he received the degree of Doctor in the University of the Sapienza. At the same time he by no means neglected the theological studies proper to his condition, and more congenial not only to his taste, but also to the strong inclination which he felt to dedicate himself wholly to God and the salvation of souls. To the same end he frequently attended the conferences on cases of moral theology, and the gatherings of devout and learned persons, making also a point of being present where he knew there were good preachers, that he might learn the practical method of announcing the Divine word. With the same object in view he made for himself a *selva predicabile*, using for that purpose as best he could such material as passed through his hands, that he might have a treasury to draw upon in the exercise of that ministry to which he felt himself called.

Nor must we omit to mention how Divine Providence, which always watched over him, permitted that he should receive instruction of another kind the better to equip him for the most difficult duty to which he was destined; and this was to make him humble and very circumspect by means of a multitude of scruples which tormented him without ceasing, until at last he almost began to put aside all thoughts of dedicating himself to the good of his neighbor. And he would certainly have done so had not the same Divine Providence sent to his assistance a worthy and experienced laborer in the vineyard. This was Father Costanzo, a celebrated missionary of the Company of Jesus, who had noticed Fr. Thomas, and, perhaps, foreseeing the great work which he would do among souls, if he gave himself to the ministry, used such persuasion with him as to induce him to go out at least once in his company to the holy missions. The young priest consented, and this first trial sufficed to confirm his hopes and to decide his vocation. Because, fired by the example of his companions and by the immense fruit which resulted from their labors, he also began to hear confessions and afterwards to preach God's word to the people. This was enough to sweep away all further hesitation and induce him to devote himself entirely to missions. He at once began to try and gather about him a few companions, animated by the same thought. Having found some who were willing to join him, he wrote to his father, who, instead of hindering him, manifested his satisfaction by making himself responsible for the travelling expenses and

maintenance of Fr. Thomas and his colleagues in this holy enterprise.

Seeing in this encouragement a further expression of the will of God, he no longer delayed to put his hand to the work. His first efforts were made in the Roman Campagna; he then travelled the province of Marittima and Campagna, and a great part of the Abruzzi, making wonderful conversions and leaving everywhere the odor of his virtues. It is not too much to say that in this he had the aid of the Holy Spirit; for, besides his want of experience, for a long time he was without sermons well composed and arranged, having to make the best use he could of certain manuscripts lent him by other priests, and of his own brief notes. This, notwithstanding, his studies and his singular gifts of nature and of grace, stood him in good stead and enabled him to perfect himself in the career which he had undertaken to the unspeakable benefit of those who heard him.



CHAPTER III.

HIS PREACHING.

WHILE our Thomas devoted himself unweariedly to obtain by his ministry the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, he did not forget the instructions left by our Lord Jesus Christ to His Apostles to rest from time to time and go to a quiet place apart to take thought for their own souls and gather fresh spiritual strength with which to meet future dangers. For this purpose

he chose the house of S. Pantaleo ai Monti, where in company with various exemplary ecclesiastics, he now and then withdrew, but especially every time he returned from his missions. And here, by reading good books, conversing with learned and spiritual persons, and above all by giving much time to prayer and devotion, he imbibed and learned those excellent sentiments by means of which he became a perfect missionary. Purity of heart, delicacy of conscience, frugality of life, absence of levity, composure of demeanor, disinterestedness and recollection in God very soon became habitual virtues with him; and in conjunction with his natural gifts, that is to say, a full and robust constitution, a strong and sonorous voice, free and graceful gesture, and a solid, convincing and popular style, deservedly acquired for him the reputation of being one of the best missionaries of his day.

However, when everything seemed to favor and encourage the fervent and extensive plans of the young priest, Divine Providence, which knows how to draw all things sweetly into the web of its eternal and most holy designs, disposed that an obstacle should arise to thwart and close the course of this apostolic ministry. By some unexpected human vicissitude, it happened that the condition of the Struzzi family suddenly changed, and the missionary's father found his means too restricted to permit him any longer to furnish the funds necessary for his son's spiritual labors. Fr. Thomas, therefore, was obliged to make a sacrifice to God and discontinue his missions.

Not that he lost courage. Sure as ever of his vocation to the apostolic life, he undertook other work involving less expense, dedicating himself especially to preaching Lenten sermons to which he afterwards added a course of catechism for some days, in order that the poor might receive the instruction necessary to a good life; and, in particular, needful aid in preparing themselves for confession in compliance with the Easter precept. The following fact will illustrate Fr. Thomas' purity of intention in his sermons. He was preaching the Lent in a thickly populated city, and in the course of the catechism which he was giving according to his usual custom, he contrived every day to introduce some example to illustrate the fault of concealing sins in confession. Now, a certain good priest who heard him, one perhaps with little experience as a confessor, began within himself to criticize Fr. Thomas, saying: "Is it possible that there is no other abuse that it should be necessary so frequently to insist on this one? After all, in cities where there are so many confessors, this fault can occur but seldom." But it happened on that very day that the confessionals were besieged by such a crowd that the critic was obliged to lend his assistance in administering the sacrament of penance. Having discharged this duty, he went at once to Fr. Struzzieri, and with much confusion addressed him as follows: "I beg your pardon; I found fault with you in my own mind because you were always insisting upon the fault of concealing sins in confession. Now I understand your motive in doing so. What a terrible abuse it is! Continue

to declare against it, because it is very necessary."

It seems certain that Fr. Struzzieri, in the course of the year 1737 retired, in company with six priests and some laymen, to live in a sanctuary in the territory of Tagliacozzo, in the diocese of the Marsi in the Abruzzi, known as the *Madonna di Oriente*. Moved, all of them, by the same desire to devote themselves to the good of the Church and of souls, they established there a kind of seminary for the education of young clerics. Taking it in turns, they also went out to evangelize the people of the locality, to the great satisfaction of all. However, the Institute did not take root. Less than three years had passed by when, through the envy of our common enemy, such a persecution was raised against these good priests that in the end an order was sent from the Court of Naples bidding them leave, not only the neighborhood, but the kingdom. There were those who wished to use their influence to procure the revocation of this mandate, but having well weighed the circumstances, the whole community decided to go away and find some other place to exercise their ministry.

Some of these worthy priests with a layman or two, withdrew to Soriano, to the house built by Cardinal Albani, adjoining the Church of S. Eutizio the Martyr, about three miles from the village. The place was afterwards granted to our Congregation by Pope Benedict XIV. But Fr. Struzzieri returned to Rome, where, thanks to the elevation to the Papal throne of the said Pontiff, he soon had occasion to employ his zeal, being appointed to preach a course of missions in the

Church of S. Lawrence in Damaso, which he did with great applause.



CHAPTER IV.

HOW HE BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH OUR HOLY
FOUNDER: HE JOINS THE CONGREGATION.

FROM what has been said it will be seen that the circumstances which surrounded Fr. Thomas at that time were uncertain, precarious and difficult; but God who never abandons those who serve Him with a true heart and pure conscience, deigned to place in his way an occasion which decided him to adopt a career, not only nobler in itself, but more exclusively directed to the glory of God.

At that time our holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, who had obtained from Pope Benedict XIV his approbation of the Institute which he was then establishing under the title of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, was endeavoring to procure the confirmation of this approval by an Apostolic Brief. For this purpose he not only wrote many letters to influential persons, but from time to time went himself to Rome to expedite matters by his presence. Now it was precisely on one of these occasions that the Saint met and became acquainted with Fr. Thomas Struzzieri. Let us hear the true history of this meeting from the mouth of Fr. Thomas himself, as he gave it when he was examined in Rome for the process of canonization of our holy Father.

“ I was staying in the house of S. Pantaleo ai Monti, where at that time several priests lived together; although I sometimes withdrew into the house of the *pii operai*, (devout workers), annexed to the Church of S. Balbina to make the exercises customary on returning from missions. On one occasion after the exercises, I thought I would remain longer than usual in the said house of S. Balbina, but some inward feeling prompted me after all to return to S. Pantaleo. I accordingly did so, and the day afterwards I was to say Mass at the Church of the Capuchin nuns which stands opposite the Church of S. Maria dei Monti. As I entered this Church I saw, at the end, a religious dressed in black, and in the middle of the Church another dressed in the same manner, and both were kneeling. As I passed near the one who knelt in the middle, turning to me he looked me in the face, and I then said to myself: ‘Is this, perhaps, Father Paul?’ And having said a few words to the Sacristan, who was close by at the prie-dieu, I went towards the sacristy. The religious then rose, and following me soon joined me in the sacristy, where I turning to him said: ‘Are you Father Paul?’ And he added: ‘Are you Don Thomas Struzzieri?’ And in the same breath we both said yes. In a moment we embraced each other, and I felt within me an ardent affection towards Fr. Paul, and he, (as he afterwards told me) felt the same towards me; so much so that for the short time during which Fr. Paul continued to remain in Rome, we were inseparable. Not long afterwards Fr. Paul left Rome, and I accompanied him on foot as far as Ponte

Molle, where as we knelt and blessed one another, he renewed the invitation already given me to enter the Congregation which he was establishing; to which I answered that I would recommend myself to our Lord to do the Divine will. This was the occasion and the first time that I began to have dealings with Fr. Paul, because previously I had not even cared about seeing him, but had even avoided opportunities which had presented themselves.

“From that time a correspondence was opened between us, although it happened, I know not how, that many of my letters failed to reach him, while I received all those he wrote to me. On which account Fr. Paul wrote to Count Gargani that not receiving my answers he concluded that I did not wish to accept his invitation, and from this he was persuaded that it was God's will that only senseless (*idioti*) and abject persons were to join the Congregation. Count Gargani repeated these expressions to me, and I, on hearing them, said: ‘Father Paul, then, thinks me a learned man, and for this reason I wish to enter the Congregation.’ And I would have set out at once if the Count had not held me back. Having made this resolution, and having been accepted by Fr. Paul, he himself, in the month of January, 1745, came to Rome to conduct me to Monte Argentaro to make my novitiate.”

From the account here given by Fr. Struzzieri himself, it will be seen how wonderful and extraordinary was his vocation; so wonderful in fact that our holy Father did not think it too much to make the journey from Monte Argentaro to Rome

—a distance of about ninety miles—on foot, and in the depth of winter, that he might help him in overcoming the opposition of friends and relatives. In this they were so successful that the Saint, in company with his new postulant was very soon able to begin the return journey without interruption. They arrived at Monte Argentaro amid the rejoicing of the good religious, and Fr. Thomas at once began a course of spiritual exercises, after which he had the happiness of receiving the habit of a novice at the hands of our holy Founder himself, on the second of February, 1745, being then nearly thirty-nine years of age. On this occasion he assumed the name of Thomas of the Side of Jesus.

The hardships suffered in the journey to Rome and back, cost our holy Founder dear. He had scarcely given the habit to Fr. Thomas when he was compelled by severe rheumatic pains, to go down to Orbetello where he remained ill for about four months. But none the less did he watch over the treasure he had acquired, as is proved by the deposition of Fr. Thomas from which we have already quoted above. “In the time of my novitiate,” he says, “every night in my dreams I seemed to be talking to Father Paul of spiritual things, and when I rose to Matins I felt my ardor rekindled and my spirit much refreshed.” From these words we may gain some idea of the fervor of our novice, the assistance he received from our holy Founder, and the abundance of divine grace poured into his soul to render him a worthy instrument of God’s glory.

The reports received of Fr. Thomas’ spiritual

progress were very soon so favorable that our holy Father had no difficulty in obtaining a dispensation for him, in virtue of which he was allowed to make his profession after a trial of only two months and a half. The Saint's satisfaction may be judged from the fact that, ill as he was, he insisted upon being conveyed from Orbetello to the Retreat that he might have the happiness of receiving the novice to profession by his own hands.



CHAPTER V.

HE BEGINS MISSIONS AS A PASSIONIST: IS SENT TO
FOUND THE RETREAT AT CECCANO;
DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED.

WE can give no better idea of the joy experienced by Fr. Thomas after his profession than he himself conveys in a letter to a friend in Rome, dated July, 1745: "I am most content and joyful," he writes, "satisfied more than ever with my resolution; and I do not understand how our Lord in his goodness should have cast the eyes of His mercy upon me, undeserving as I am of every good, because I am nothing; meriting nothing but evil, because I am a sinner. I live not among men but in the midst of saints. who serve me as a spur to perfection. I am out of the world because I seem to be among angels, such is their charity, their union, their goodness, their mortification. Oh, what an account I shall have to give to God

if I do not become a saint in a Congregation animated by the spirit of the first Christians! Great, extreme, imperceptible is the grace given by God to those whom He calls to this holy Institute." Sentiments such as these tell us how God's grace had found in the heart of Fr. Thomas all those dispositions necessary to produce abundant fruit.

However, he was not long permitted the quiet enjoyment of this holy solitude and the congenial society of his brethren in religion. In view of the numerous requests for missions, and the few subjects available for them, it was necessary that Fr. Thomas should once more dedicate himself to this work, in which his practice and experience promised very favorable results. He was sent to Orbetello and then into the dioceses of Montefiascone, Ovieto and Viterbo, not to mention other places. In all of these he became the object of esteem and veneration; and the bishops, informed of his apostolic zeal and of the immense fruit which resulted from his labors, rivaled one another in their efforts to secure him for the advantage of their respective flocks.

And here let us make two considerations. First, that although Fr. Thomas was naturally endowed with all the qualities which go to make an excellent orator, nevertheless the strength and efficacy of his sermons were derived from the spirit and feeling by which he was animated. An extract from a letter written by him at this time to the friend above mentioned will confirm this remark: "O God," he writes, "what great deceit there is in the world! We imagine that God does great things, and brings about great

conversions by means of those who are not careful about prayer, and are not detached from the world ! I speak for myself, because I certainly would not go out and give missions unless constrained thereto by obedience. What does it mean that so few Apostles converted the whole world? So long as we can preach well, we think ourselves fit to give missions. Ah, dearest friend, I say that we can give missions when we possess a right spirit, a well regulated interior, and a habit of recollection; unless our words are of fire, they will not destroy vice; they will not even get a spider out of his den." Such sentiments prove plainly enough how safe were the paths trodden by this servant of God.

The second consideration is that the Divine Goodness was especially generous in endowing him with that gift which so wonderfully moves and touches even the most obstinate hearts, commonly known as the gift of the affections. This we know from his own lips, he having confessed on one occasion that our Lord had granted him this grace through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, while he was saying Mass before the miraculous picture of our Lady of Good Counsel at Gennezzano. The gift was recognized by that most celebrated missionary, St. Leonard of Port Maurice, who having heard him preach one day, went afterwards to visit him, and congratulating him, used these words: "You have received a great gift from our Lord. I mean the gift of the affections; if only I possessed it, how much greater the fruit of my missions would be ! And good was it that our Fr. Thomas while using this

heavenly favor on behalf of souls was able to keep himself humble and thereby succeed all the more admirably in his holy ministry.

After he had evangelized many districts in Tuscany, and all the upper part of the Patrimony of St. Peter, a new field of labor now opened to him in the province of Campagna. Towards the end of the year 1747, the clergy and people of Ceccano, in the diocese of Ferentino, made overtures to our holy Founder to obtain the establishment of a Retreat of the new Congregation, and the Saint, after making the necessary enquiries, determined to send Fr. Thomas, and with him Fr. Anthony of the Passion, that they might visit the place and, whilst they were arranging such things as were of the first necessity, employ themselves in giving missions in the surrounding districts. Fr. Thomas discharged the duty entrusted to him so satisfactorily that in the following January it was possible to take possession of the Retreat, which was dedicated to S. Maria di Corniano, our holy Founder being present for that purpose.

However, it is unfortunately true that the works which are of God must be known to be such by the difficulties and opposition they meet with and that His servants must be countersigned with the characteristics of virtue, and especially of patience, humility, resignation and perseverance, without which something essential would seem to be wanting in their right to this title. These marks of Divine approbation were not wanting on this occasion. It happened that on account of the missions already given by Fr. Thomas, and because of the new Retreat at Cec-

cano, of which he had been appointed superior, the bishops and people of those parts were so excited that everyone wished to have a similar foundation for the good of souls. Foremost in this agitation were the towns of Terracina, Paliano and Vico, whose proposals seemed to have been entertained by our holy Founder. But, as was to be expected, this sudden enthusiasm stirred up jealousy, envy, discontent and rumors to such an extent that, representations having been made to Rome, an order was issued for the suppression of all these projects, while the municipalities who should presume to promote foundations were threatened with penalties.

It was under these circumstances that Fr. Thomas displayed not only conspicuous talent and prudence in writing most efficacious and learned letters in favor of the cause he had at heart, but also his eminent virtue and his firmness of spirit. Obligated to live in that hovel near Ceccano, a place fitter to shelter animals, (for which purpose it had been originally used) than religious, without hope of being able to proceed with the construction and furnishing of the building, he never lost heart, but strong in spirit and full of faith in God, he applied himself, in great peace of mind, to maintain observance among the religious, and to help with all possible fervor the soul of his neighbor. His forbearing patience and resignation were not in vain. The affair had been committed to a special Congregation of Cardinals, who in the year 1750, pronounced themselves in favor of founding these Retreats. So after many uncertainties, toils and sighs, calm was at last obtained after two years.

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE HE CONTINUES HIS MISSIONS, HE IS DESTINED
TO FOUND FOUR OTHER RETREATS.

MEANWHILE, as has been said, notwithstanding the opposition and the difficulties of every kind which he encountered, Fr. Thomas continued to give free vent to his apostolic zeal by giving missions in the neighborhood. These resulted in a request that a Retreat might be opened near Fabvaterra where there was a Church dedicated to S. Sosio the Martyr. Our holy Father, after enquiries, thought it expedient to accept the offer, the more so because for the present all persecution seemed to have been laid aside. He therefore deputed Fr. Thomas to take private possession of the property, substituting another religious in his place as Rector of the Retreat of Ceccano which had now taken sufficient root. This true son of obedience executed his commission with all punctuality, and went to the place in company with three other religious. It required considerable courage to undertake such a work in hand, for all that was offered the pioneers in the way of habitation consisted of a few small and tumble-down ground-floor rooms with a larger apartment overhead. However, by dint of patience and industry, the lower rooms were adapted to community purposes, while by means of plastered canvas partitions the upper part was divided into cells, so that in April, 1751, the place was ready to receive a family of religious with such convenience as was possible considering the restricted space at disposal.

It happened almost at the same time that Mgr. Oddi, bishop of Terracina, after having begun to build a Retreat for the Congregation near that city, was suddenly called by God to his eternal repose. It now seemed as though the project would fall to the ground, for no one was forthcoming with the funds necessary to bring the building to completion. But Mgr. Palombella, the new bishop, regretting the suspension of a work which promised such good to his diocese, bethought himself of the expedient of inviting Fr. Thomas to give a mission in the city. Nothing more was necessary. The servant of God had no sooner made his appearance than the fervor stirred up among the people became so great, that in a moment both municipality and private persons spontaneously contributed all that was needed to finish the building. The work was taken up again with such vigor that in the following February our holy Founder was able to take possession of the Retreat in person.

It was on this occasion that the Saint, seeing how the number of Retreats was increasing, and how far apart some of them were, began to think of a division of government. He therefore reserved to himself those foundations in the Patriarchy of St. Peter, while he confided to Fr. Thomas the others in the province of Campagna. This division was formally established in the General Chapter held in the following year in which Fr. Thomas was canonically elected Provincial, being the first in the Congregation to bear that title.

The trust thus reposed in him was well re-

warded, for whilst he still devoted himself to missions no less fruitfully than before, his new office seemed to make him more than ever anxious on behalf of the good of the Congregation, in pursuance of which he spared himself neither fatigue nor sacrifice.

In 1755 he gave a very successful mission at Paliano, where there was an ancient sanctuary dedicated to our Lady of Pugliano, at that time in course of restoration. Fr. Thomas, in the hope of founding a Retreat, took up his residence there with one companion amid many discomforts and inconveniences. Here he collected funds and at the same time gave an eye to the building operations which he pushed on with such success that after a few months, that is to say, in November of the same year, he was able, by commission of our holy Founder, to take solemn possession of the house with a community of eleven religious. In this way the new Province came to consist of three Retreats in which, thanks to the assiduous direction of Fr. Thomas, regular observance flourished wonderfully, together with fervor of spirit and the exercise of every virtue.

But Divine Providence, which had destined the servant of God to greater things, disposed that in the General Chapter of 1758 he should be elected first Consultor General, and Procurator of the whole Congregation. These offices involved a change of residence, but Fr. Thomas did not on that account diminish his fervor and care in sacrificing everything to the advantage of the Congregation, from which he had received so many tokens of confidence and affection.

At this time, with the consent of our holy Founder, he began to make efforts for the foundation of a Retreat in Rome. To that end he used every means in his power with the help of many influential persons, but to no purpose, so that the idea had for the time being to be given up. Nevertheless Fr. Thomas' zeal was not altogether overcome. Persuaded of the advantage which the Congregation would gain by having a Retreat if not actually within the capital of the Catholic world, at least within its vicinity; as though to compensate for his want of success in previous negotiations, he obtained a rescript empowering him to acquire a little convent once inhabited by the Trinitarian Fathers, built on the summit of Monte Laziale, commonly known as Monte Cavo. Armed with this permission, he himself went there first, and suffered untold hardships in procuring and arranging such things as were necessary to establish a community in that inconvenient spot. However, after many sacrifices he succeeded in his intention, and in March, 1758, took possession of the place in the name of our Founder and established a small community with regular observance.



CHAPTER VII.

HE IS SENT BY THE POPE TO CORSICA AS THEOLOGIAN TO THE APOSTOLIC VISITOR, AND IS AFTERWARDS MADE COADJUTOR BISHOP.

IN the course of the year 1759 Pope Clement XIII moved by zeal and compassion for the deplorable state of ecclesiastical affairs in Corsica determined to send an Apostolic Visitor to that island. His choice fell upon Mgr. Crescenzo de Angelis, bishop of Segni, to whom Fr. Thomas was assigned as companion with the title of Theologian. The unexpected news of this selection disturbed not a little the peace of the servant of God, because it necessarily involved separation from his beloved Congregation, and the end of his life of penitential retirement. Equally keen was the regret experienced by our holy Founder, who by this change saw himself deprived of a singularly active support, doubly useful in those days of difficult beginnings. However, having regard to the will of Christ's Vicar, to the great good which would result to souls, and to the short duration of the visit (for it was not expected to last more than two years) the Saint consented, and induced Fr. Thomas to accept the charge thus laid upon him.

The bishop and his companion embarked at Civita Vecchia on April 7th, 1760, and arrived in Corsica on the 23rd of the same month, the island being then subject to the Republic of Genoa. It would be too long to enter upon the great evils which afflicted the island on every side. Suffice it to say that public affairs were in the greatest

disorder owing to the thousand factions which were continually at war with one another. Of the five dioceses into which the island was divided, only two possessed a bishop. Then the clergy and regular Orders were living in open disorder, no longer subject to their lawful superiors; in fine everything was in such a state of confusion and the scandal so unspeakable that the Visit might well be considered an enterprise not only dangerous in itself but very doubtful as to its possible results.

To convince the reader that this **was** so, it is only necessary to state that the two Visitors had scarcely set foot on the island when they were informed to their dismay that a reward of 40,000 lire had been promised to anyone who should bring them alive to Genoa. However, as their only object was to provide for the salvation of souls, and the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline, they took courage, in the hope that God would assist and defend them in the midst of so many dangers. And in fact when Fr. Thomas went to interview the chief leader of the people, a certain Pasquale de Paoli, who had assumed the title of General, and conducted himself like an absolute monarch, he found him rather well disposed than otherwise, and ready to consent that the Pope's representative should begin his visitation by turning his attention first of all to the dioceses where the need was greatest. In every parish the more formal part of the visitation was preceded by a mission given by Fr. Thomas; then a Confirmation was held and the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist were administered.

At the same time inveterate enemies were induced to make friends, abuses were removed, disorders were remedied; in short, everything possible was done to deal effectually with the evils which had taken root in the midst of such corruption and neglect. One may readily imagine the difficulties and obstacles which both the prelate and the missionary had to overcome.

To these must be added perpetual opposition on the part of the government of the Genoese Republic which demanded a treaty with the Holy See, of which the first article was to provide for the recall of the Apostolic Visitor from Corsica. The proposed treaty came to nothing; but a secret agitation continued to be carried on against the Papal representatives, so that it was almost always necessary to furnish them with an escort of nationalist soldiers for fear of the snares which were set for them. On one occasion amongst others, when Fr. Thomas had left the city of Bastia to visit Turriani, a distance of about five miles, he was half an hour behind time. This trifling fact sufficed to arouse the suspicions of some Genoese soldiers who were lying in ambush and to induce them to attack the Corsican fighting men who were escorting the missionary. Three of these latter were shot dead in the presence of Fr. Thomas, who was so horrified by the tragedy that for two months he was affected by paralysis in all his limbs. At another time, when he was staying in the district of Campoloro, a barrel of gunpowder was found under his room, in consequence of which the Nationalists engaged themselves to furnish a guard of soldiers wherever he might be living.

It is not surprising to learn that such experiences disturbed the Apostolic Visitor not a little, increasing the illness with which he had been previously afflicted, and in the end, feeling himself no longer able to cope with such a state of affairs, he determined to return to Rome. Along with the Pope's formal permission the bishop also received faculties empowering him to appoint Fr. Thomas his Vicar *ad interim*, in order that the inhabitants of the island might not be deprived of spiritual assistance. All things being arranged, the bishop left for Rome in June, 1764, and the following day Fr. Thomas published the letters patent appointing him Vicar-General.

This Vicariate, however, lasted but a short time, because Mgr. De Angelis, on his arrival in Rome, found his illness much more serious than he had anticipated, for which reason the Pope, at his request, freed him from further work in Corsica and appointed Fr. Thomas to finish the visitation in his stead. The servant of God was most unwilling to accept any dignity of the kind, as he had already shown when the bishop of Ferentino wished him to be consecrated as his suffragan; he nevertheless bowed his head to the will of the Vicar of Jesus Christ ready and disposed as he always was to sacrifice himself to the good of the Church and of souls. Having received his credential letters, therefore, he went to Sardinia, that he might receive episcopal consecration with the title *in partibus infidelium* from the Archbishop of Sassari. This was in December, 1764.

On his return to Corsica he entered upon the duties of his office with all possible solicitude. One

of his first cares was to restore promotions and the conferring of holy orders in accordance with canonical regulations; a matter as to which, hitherto, there had been so little concern that many young men had been ordained without knowing even the Christian doctrine. He had likewise to put in order the method of appointments to parishes, to decide serious disputes among the regular clergy, to settle long seated discords between towns and villages as well as enmities between private persons; and to these may be added constant preaching, confirmations, and the administration of the other sacraments. To accomplish all this he had almost always to travel by steep places and impassable tracks, there being no roads in existence; for the same reason he was obliged frequently to go on foot and to content himself with the roughest accommodation. And then he had often to encounter difficulties raised by the leaders of the people, who, although they did not interfere with the actual visitation, would not hear a word on the subject of their supposed "ecclesiastical immunity"—and this kind of opposition was in certain cases so obstinate that he was compelled, with the consent of the Pope, to use the censures of the Church publicly against the Magistrates.

Nor was this all. To increase his difficulties and tribulation, war broke out in 1767-8, when the island was invaded by the French troops. Under these circumstances the prelate had to exercise great prudence and tact in order to preserve neutrality and continue his duties as Apostolic Visitor. Later, in the year 1769, the island was visited by

an epidemic of quinsy and catarrh which in the course of three months carried off six thousand persons. The prelate himself did not escape, and was brought so low by the malady that the administration of the Holy Viaticum was thought necessary. However, a servant who was attending him suggested that he should recommend himself to Father Paul, who was still living. Receiving the suggestion with surprise, the prelate answered: "Oh, yes,—I did not think of it." After a short time he suddenly vomited forth the catarrh which was troubling him, and felt quite restored to health. The circumstance was at once ascribed to the powerful intercession of our holy Father and Founder.



CHAPTER VIII.

RETURNS TO ROME AND IS MADE BISHOP OF AMELIA,
THEN ADMINISTRATOR OF TODI. ASSISTS AT
THE DEATH OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS.
IS TRANSFERRED AS BISHOP TO
THE DIOCESE OF TODI.

IN the same year 1769 the French having made themselves masters of the whole island of Corsica, a treaty was concluded between the government of France and the Holy See regulating the appointment and installation of bishops; whereupon Pope Clement XIV brought the Apostolic visitation to a close. Notice to this effect was sent to Mgr. Struzzieri in July, 1770, and the good prelate having bid farewell to the people in

a tender pastoral letter, left the island, amidst acclamations and regret, on a vessel despatched for the purpose by the Supreme Pontiff, and returned to Rome after an absence of more than ten years.

He found awaiting him a cordial welcome from the Pope, who he hoped would now leave him free to rejoin his beloved Congregation. But no such favor was granted him; for he was almost immediately informed that he was destined to fill the vacant episcopal See of Amelia. Protestations availed nothing; the Pontiff was firm, and our holy Founder could only exhort the prelate to obey. In the month of September, 1770, he was formally appointed, and in November he took up his residence in Amelia. Here also were troubles in store. The diocese lacked a seminary, the bishop's "mensa" was in debt, the Cathedral and parish churches neglected: these were some of the difficulties to be faced in the very beginning. Far from losing heart, however, the bishop proceeded to visit the whole diocese carefully, and in a short time he was able to make good the most serious effects of neglect. For the establishment and endowment of his seminary, he obtained leave to suppress a declining monastery, and opened a school which he confided to the care of the "maestre pie." He also restored the Cathedral and transformed the better churches into centres of parochial worship; and he had already planned the foundation of other pious institutions when he was called by unexpected circumstances to another field of labor.

The death of Monsignor Passini, bishop of

Todi, had left that See vacant, and the election of the Vicar Capitular had occasioned serious dissensions among the canons of the Cathedral. The Sacred Congregation of the Council, who had been appealed to, requested Mgr. Struzzieri, as the nearest bishop, to enquire into the affair. The bishop of Amelia despatched for that purpose his own Vicar General to Todi, giving him such instructions that he was very soon able to compose the said dissensions to the satisfaction of all parties. Pope Clement XIV much pleased with this happy result, decided to reward Mgr. Struzzieri for his labors in Corsica and his more recent work of restoring order in the diocese of Amelia, by appointing him also administrator of the See of Todi.

The bishop, having received the necessary brief, went at once to Todi to begin his new duties. He met with a welcome whose warmth was probably owing to the remembrance of a most successful mission which, as a simple religious, he had given in the city many years previously. His entry in fact was in the nature of a triumph. Convinced of the necessity of putting many things in order, he entered upon his visitation after giving a course of spiritual exercises in the Cathedral. Subsequently he undertook a tour of the parishes, and in a short time made such arrangements and improvements as his prudence dictated; though not without much fatigue, for at the same time he was not forgetful of his own diocese of Amelia.

The good prelate was about to bring this pastoral visit to a close when the sorrowful news reached him that his spiritual Father, St. Paul of

the Cross, lay at the point of death. His desire to see our holy Founder for the last time dictated a letter to the religious in Rome announcing his arrival there at the earliest possible moment. On October the 18th, he reached the Retreat of SS. John and Paul, just in time to behold his beloved Father before his death, and to take leave of him. There seemed something almost miraculous in this coincidence, as though our holy Founder, aware that he whom he loved so much was on his way to his beside, wished to wait in order to give him a last embrace. The dying Saint knew the bishop at once, and after saying a few words to him with a smiling face, passed into his agony and placidly expired. The depth of the prelate's grief may be imagined, though his satisfaction at being present at the last offices rendered to his guide, master and loving Father tempered it not a little.

Mgr. Struzzieri remained in Rome to take part in the ceremonies which attended the elevation of Pius VI to the Papal throne and to hear the intentions of Christ's Vicar in his own regard. He himself wished to return to the diocese of Amelia, but in obedience to the Pope's desire he accepted the See of Todi to which he was transferred absolutely, and of which he took possession in the month of December.

His first care was to have a solemn mission given to the people, for which purpose he summoned to Todi the Fathers of our Congregation whose labors were fruitful beyond all expectation. He then began the restoration of the seminary buildings; he also erected a decent house for the

canons, and ordered various embellishments in the Cathedral. However, his advanced age, the fatigues of so many missions and visitations, and his failing health did not allow him to complete all the plans he had formed for the good of his diocese. Besides frequent attacks of gout which often rendered him unable to walk, a stroke of paralysis in November, 1777, awakened the anxious fear of friends. Fortunately God still spared him. The good bishop gradually recovered, and in April of the following year was able to travel to Rome, where, by special commission of the Sovereign Pontiff, he presided at the General Chapter of our Congregation.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS SPIRIT OF UNION WITH GOD.

HAVING brought this sketch to the last period of the life of this servant of God, before describing his death it will be fitting to retrace our steps and consider more in detail those virtues which distinguished him and constituted the treasure with which he acquired perfection. Everyone who has followed our story must have recognized in Mgr. Struzzieri a mind of great elevation, a heart altogether detached from earthly things, a strong and courageous spirit, a man who, convinced of the high mission to which Divine Providence had called him, had consecrated all his powers to the attainment of the greatest possible success. Whether we consider him as a

simple religious or as a bishop, he was always the same: his intentions, his sentiments, his inclinations and his conduct never deflected from the lofty standard he had established for himself. As a secular priest he began to seek God alone, and to sacrifice himself for His glory; to that ideal he remained always faithful. It was enough to see and talk with him to be convinced that he was a man who lived only for God. His gravity, combined with modesty and cheerfulness, his conversation, always enlivened with holy fervor and the unction of heavenly inspiration; his indifference and resignation to the Divine will under all circumstances, his courage in enduring discomforts, contradictions and trials of all kinds marked him out as a man who sought nothing but God, whose one delight was to offer himself up as a willing sacrifice to God.

No better confirmation of what we are saying can be given than by a reference to some of the notes which this servant of God has left us in his own handwriting. In one of them we read: "I will try to preserve recollection as much as possible; and to this end I will keep myself retired when no real necessity obliges me to go out, keeping myself in the presence of God, often glancing with affection at the Crucifix and our Lady. Whenever I rise, whether by night or by day, I will prostrate myself before God with my face to the ground and will make three acts, the first of adoration, the second of thanksgiving, and the third of offering." Another note runs thus: "I will endeavor to be the first to enter the choir, and while the others are coming in, I will place my-

self in the presence of God, making many intentions to chant God's praises well; e. g., to obey the Church which orders me to do so, and the holy Rules which prescribe the same, uniting my prayer to that of Jesus; to the praises which the angels and saints sing to God in heaven, with the intention of making an act of love with every breath I draw." Elsewhere he tells us on what he founded his hopes, whence he drew his courage; where he sought his quiet and content. "In the morning," he writes, "prostrate at the feet of the Crucifix, I will make an act of distrust of myself, having regard to my insufficiency and inaptitude for everything; and an act of confidence in God, certain that He will help me and give me His grace, and the lights necessary to guide my poor soul, and to fulfil the duties of my office, whether in missions or in work for the good of the Congregation."

In another place he wrote: "When I give missions I will be under no anxiety as to what may happen to stand in the way of my plans: I will give no place to that worrying solicitude which robs the heart of its peace. I will look upon the mission as not mine but God's; I will not look upon myself as a missionary, but will acknowledge Jesus Christ as missionary-in-chief, before whom I will lay all the difficulties, the necessities and concerns of the people, and thus I will consider the mission as not given by me but by Jesus Christ himself." Here is another extract on the same subject: "When I have ascended the pulpit, before beginning to preach I will make a spiritual communion, and will clothe

myself with Jesus Christ, hiding myself in Him, so that He may preach and not I. Then I will salute all the guardian angels of those present, that they may help me to preach. While I am preaching I will keep my mind fixed on God as much as possible; at least I will make from time some inward aspiration to our Lord, is whose loving arms I will place myself as a child, that He may move and guide me whether He will."

After reading these extracts it is unnecessary to ask whether this servant of God was a man of prayer; for it would be impossible to draw such sentiments from any other source. The memorials also tell us that not content with conversing with God in the vocal and mental prayer common to all the religious, he determined to increase it. Here is his resolution on the subject: "Every day I will endeavor to reserve a little time to make half an hour of mental prayer by myself, besides that which is customary for the community, and this shall be for the most part after my evening studies, as I am then less fit than at other times for study itself." And this rule was not made to be observed only when he was privileged to enjoy solitude. He was faithful to it during his journeys and even when he was engaged in missions and other employments proper to his office. A further extract from his notes throws additional light on this custom of the holy servant of God: "During a mission, before going into the pulpit, I will engage in prayer at the foot of the Crucifix for some good space of time: here I will leave all the dryness, weariness and unwillingness of my poor heart, and my repugnance to give missions. From

the holy Side of Jesus I will take the words of my sermon and will soak them in His Precious Blood: In the same holy Side I will place sinners that they may be converted; protesting that all the good is and shall be His, and none of it my own, except the imperfections which may stand in the way of greater good being done: and then I will humble myself before His Divine Majesty. I will pray Mary Most Holy, and the patron Saints of the place, as well as my own, and the holy Angels to intercede for me and for the people." Moreover, eye witnesses, and especially his companions, have left on record their testimony to the fidelity of the ardent missionary to these practices.

In like manner, during the laborious employments with which he was occupied as superior in the Congregation, and as Visitor in Corsica, and later as bishop, everyone noticed his anxiety to keep himself always united to God in prayer. "My greatest consolation," he writes to St. Paul of the Cross from Corsica, "among my numerous occupations, in the midst of vexations and difficulties of my office, is in reading your letters and in prayer." Anyone who saw him engaged in the recitation of the Divine Office, or in the celebration of the mysteries of the altar, could not fail to be struck by his attention and devotion. Such was his modesty, such his recollection and fervor that all who saw him were filled with the spirit of devotion.



CHAPTER X.

HIS DEVOTION TO THE PASSION AND TO OUR LADY.

WORTHY of particular notice is the devotion which this servant of God cherished towards the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, as the special and characteristic title of the Institute to which he had consecrated his life. As a youth, his love for this profound mystery was ever foremost, but after he had taken the vow of special dedication to it on the occasion of his religious profession, his devotion to the Passion became wonderfully intensified. His sense of responsibility as to the fulfilment of this particular obligation, by promoting devotion to our Lord's sufferings among the faithful, was extraordinary. On the one hand he was deeply sensible of the efficacy of such a means to incite sinners to penance and the just to perfection. But on the other, it seemed to him very difficult to place this mystery before the people in a fitting manner; that is to say, with the simplicity, clearness and abundance of affection, which were the characteristics of the method adopted by our holy Founder himself, in the meditations he gave on the Passion. In this uncertainty he had recourse to our Lady, as he himself afterwards confessed, begging her to obtain for him the grace that he might know how to fulfil this vow and secure its proper effect. And in truth our Most Blessed Mother was pleased to answer his prayer, for it was afterwards observed that as often as Fr. Thomas gave meditations on

the Passion of Jesus and the Dolors of Mary, he softened the hardest hearts and obtained the most wonderful and stupendous results.

But the most undeniable proof of his devotion to the Passion is contained in the Office of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, with its Octave, which he composed at the desire of our holy Founder. Scarcely had he received this commission than he applied himself to it with the greatest ardor, and before leaving for Corsica he had already finished the work. It is related in the memoirs, (and Fr. Thomas used to tell the same story) that when he was engaged in the composition of this office at the Retreat of Paliano, he had already selected the responsories of the lessons from those appointed for Holy Week. Now one morning as he was working at his table, a religious entered his cell and asked him what responsories he was putting at the end of the lessons. Fr. Thomas replied that he had drawn upon those which were common to the Church. "No," said the religious, "put in their place the *impropii* from the Mass of Good Friday after the uncovering of the Cross." The servant of God thereupon referred to them and finding them quite adapted to his purpose, made the proposed alteration. Afterwards, he questioned all the religious in that Retreat to find out which of them had visited him in his room that morning for the purpose of making that suggestion, (for he being absorbed in his work had not identified its author), and great was his surprise when he understood that no member of the community had been to his cell to advise him.

As the servant of God, who was then about to set out for Corsica, was anxious that the Office should not be sanctioned until the Congregation itself had been finally approved by the Holy See, the matter remained for some time in suspense. The approval of the new Institute by Brief of Pope Clement XIV was given in 1769, and Mgr. Struzzi already destined for the bishopric of Amelia, returned to Rome from Corsica in the July of the following year. Soon after his arrival he withdrew for a short time to our Retreat on Monte Cavo, where, as he rested after his recent fatigue, he revised the Office of the Passion, which he consigned to our holy Founder before he set out for Amelia. The Saint took the manuscript to the Pope, who appointed the suffragan bishop of Sabina to examine it.

Although the Office was warmly praised by this prelate, the Pope delayed his formal approval until he should have decided as to its adoption for general use throughout the universal Church in thanksgiving to God for the restoration of peace to the world. Further progress was prevented by the death of Clement XIV, who left the glory of approving the Office of the Passion to his successor Pius VI, who after submitting it to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, granted to us the privilege of commemorating the Passion as a festival of the first class with a proper octave on the Tuesday after Sexagesima Sunday. This time was selected by our holy Founder and Mgr. Struzzi as being most appropriate for remembering our Lord's sufferings, because it was precisely the period chosen by blind worldings to renew those suffer-

ings by their license during the carnival. The Supreme Pontiff, on the occasion of a visit he paid to our Retreat near Terracina, deigned to grant us the privilege of reciting the said Office with the right of a semi-double on all the Fridays of the year not impeded. Mgr. Struzzieri had also the intention of publishing a book on the Passion, but his occupations prevented him from bringing the work to completion.

We will close this chapter with a brief reference to Fr. Thomas' devotion to the most holy Virgin Mary whom he regarded as his most loving mother. When he spoke of this great Lady, it seemed—so we read in the memoirs—as though his heart, all dissolved with love for her, was forcing its way through his lips. In his missions he never omitted a special sermon in her honor, in which he exalted her singular perfections and demonstrated her maternal love for men and especially for sinners. And as his words came from a flaming heart, they melted his audience into tears, and brought the most obstinate sinners to repentance. How pleasing this was to the most holy Virgin we may argue from the fact that she protected him in the midst of a thousand dangers, while she won him success in all his undertakings and helped him to arrive at the highest perfection.



CHAPTER XI.

HIS LOVE FOR THE CONGREGATION AND
REGULAR OBSERVANCE.

PROMINENT among many spiritual characteristics of this servant of God was his love for the Institute of which he was so conspicuous an ornament. From the day of his entrance into the novitiate until the end of his life he was ever jealous in its regard, always exacting with himself and with others in promoting faithful adherence to the Rules of the Congregation. In this connection it will be useful to quote at length from his own description of the life he had embraced. It is true that he writes of the spirit which animated his companions in their observance of the Rule, but at the same time he reveals, without intention, his own fidelity to its prescriptions. This, as we know, was so remarkable that after only ten weeks of novitiate he was admitted to profession. He writes thus: "When I set foot for the first time in the Retreat of Monte Argentaro, I seemed to enter a Paradise, for the holiness, which the religious cherished in their hearts, shone visibly in their faces. Not a word was heard in the house, least of all in times of profound silence. They were so careful about poverty that every one sought for himself the worst things in the house; the habits which were the most worn and patched, and even the sandals which others had laid aside. In the matter of food they were so mortified that their superiors were obliged to be always on the watch to see that they took what was necessary.

They made every possible excuse to leave now one thing, now another, and very often they contented themselves with bread and water. And if those things allowed by the Rule were not put upon the table, or if there was only a small quantity of food, they never opened their lips to make the least complaint, or even a sigh; because they saw God's will in all things. Many also used bitter herbs and powders to take all flavor from their food, or they would eat the leavings of others!

“They were so constant in the practise of other austerities, that, spurred on by the love of God and by the true spirit of penance, they found new methods of mortifying themselves in public and in private. So great was their hatred for themselves, that it was necessary to restrain them, lest they should suffer by being trodden under foot in public and in private. At times I saw many instruments of penance for the purpose of tormenting their hands, arms, legs and waists, which were truly horrible to look upon, and which it would appear impossible to use without scruple. Every week without exception, they took the discipline to blood, once, twice or three times.

“They were so given to meditation, that I myself can bear witness that nearly all of them received from our Lord during their first months the gift of prayer, which is the key of the other graces: and very often after Matins some remained to pray before the Blessed Sacrament or in their cells until the hour of Prime. Nor could it be otherwise, for the religious put no impediment in the way of God's graces, which were so abundantly poured out over their hearts. They seemed

always absorbed in thought, with their eyes on the ground that they might not lose the presence of God. They were never seen at the windows; never to speak with the seculars who came to the Retreat; never did they notice the doings of others; never were they curious in asking news of the world, nor did they ever leave the house on worldly business.

“In holy obedience they were so exact and punctual that—and I speak the pure truth—they went about asking what was the superior’s wish that they might execute it. It was never necessary to repeat an order a second time; once given, it was given for always, and was at once obeyed. I observed with wonder that some did not wait for the superior to finish the word of command, but as soon as he opened his mouth they went to perform the obedience.

“Their recreations were a school of prayer, they never spoke of the world, their native place or of earthly things, but of God; of giving their blood for the faith; of the conversion of souls; of the lives of the saints, in such a way that they left the recreation room more fervent, and more desirous to do great things for God and to suffer for His love, than if they had just come from prayer. Of their charity I do not speak, because it was so great that each tried to bear the other’s burden; everyone accused himself that his brother might be exonerated; and one would never speak against another. Detailed account of their virtues, their spirit and their holy doings would be too much. In a word, it seemed to me on my arrival, that I beheld so many angels in whose

company I was unworthy to remain. The very walls exhaled holiness, and seemed to me to guard a Paradise."

So far Fr. Thomas: and after reading his remarks it is unnecessary to seek further evidence of the pleasure he found in the observance of the Rules of the Congregation. Nor was his fervor of that kind which evaporates with time. Certain resolutions which he noted down sufficiently prove how faithful and constant he was in the matter of observance. We read in one of these notes: "Since my perfection depends upon the observance of the Rules, I resolve to obey them in the Retreat, on the missions, and during my journeys.....Every day I will read a chapter of the Rules, and a chapter of the Holy Scripture; the former I will read every morning, before the spiritual reading, and the latter, before the spiritual reading in the afternoon.....The particular examen which is made in one's room, I will devote to the subject of interior recollection, and I will make it with deliberation; then I will throw myself at the feet of most holy Mary, and will tell her my defects and omissions, as one does at the feet of a confessor; I will repeat my resolution and by way of penance, will make three crosses on the ground with my tongue.....When I am talking with seculars, and the hour for choir or prayer arrives, I will take leave of them, unless real and not apparent necessity urges me to the contrary; and in this matter I resolve absolutely to conquer all human respect for the love of Jesus and Mary."

Even more remarkable was his perseverance

in this line of conduct after his elevation to the episcopacy, in all those things which were compatible with the same. It is related that after his return from Corsica, during a visit to the Retreat on Monte Cavo he one day entered the kitchen, when, overhearing the sound of conversation, he said: "Remember, dear brothers, to observe the rule of silence, because it is our custom to do so." During his stay in the Retreat of SS. John and Paul in Rome, it was observed that he came to the community prayer with all punctuality. One day, during the same visit, one of the elder Fathers met Mgr. Struzzieri in the dormitory, and having saluted him, said a few words. But the bishop signed to him to say no more, whispering, as he did so: "In the dormitory, silence is the rule." Whereupon the religious was greatly edified, and all the more because the bishop had been so long absent from a Retreat. Such examples serve to illustrate how full his heart was of love for holy observance and for the Congregation of which he was a son.



CHAPTER XII.

HIS EXACTITUDE IN OBSERVING HIS RELIGIOUS VOWS.

ONE of the most efficacious means of perfection which the Church possesses is certainly contained in the vows which are made in the act of religious profession. If however the taking of such vows be a matter of comparatively small

difficulty, it is by no means so easy, considering the frailty of human nature, to persevere in the faithful observance of them. When, therefore, a soul is found to have kept them scrupulously, it is a certain sign of great virtue and perfection, such perfection in fact as is sketched in the memorials which remain to us of Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus.

In the matter of poverty, so they tell us, he was always very jealous. While he lived in the Congregation, he not only took care never to exercise his free will in disposing of things, but would never keep for his use anything superfluous; he would even delight in dispensing with objects which most people would consider as necessary. It is related that when he was Provincial he went to the Retreat of S. Angelo near Vetralla, to take part in the Chapter, where he appeared in a habit so poor and torn that our holy Founder, as soon as he saw it, asked Fr. Thomas if he had no other. Having understood that this poor habit was the only one its wearer possessed, the Saint immediately ordered a new one to replace it.

When, afterwards, he was elevated to the episcopal dignity, he changed his condition, indeed, but not his heart, in proof of which we know that as soon as he returned from Corsica, having gone to the Hospice of the Host Holy Crucifix of S. John Lateran, to visit St. Paul of the Cross, the latter's first salutation to the traveller was: "I congratulate you, because you went poor to Corsica and poor you have returned." And this was literally true, because, as he himself said in all simplicity, when, during his stay in Corsica, his

annual stipend of twelve hundred crowns arrived from Rome, he used to give the box containing the money to his major-domo; nor would he allow it to be opened in his presence, because, as he added "the very sight of money is apt to make one fond of it."

As bishop of Amelia, and afterwards of Todi, his love of poverty was not less remarkable. His table was frugal; and his palace, though decently equipped in that portion of it which he reserved for his guests, was very poorly furnished in the small part of the building kept for his own use. A carriage he never used, unless the loan of one was offered by some devout person: except on such occasions he went always on foot; and when some of our religious suggested that he should at least provide himself with a sedan-chair, he replied: "If I could afford it, a horse would suffice; but I am poor and cannot buy one." A nephew of his having written to announce his approaching arrival in Amelia, to visit the bishop, received an answer to this effect: "You are free to come to Amelia, but I must let you know that I cannot receive you at the palace, because I am a poor bishop; and what I have is not mine, but belongs to the poor."

In the matter of chastity, he was not less watchful, as we may gather from his notes: "When I speak with seculars," he writes, "I will bear myself with gravity, I will use all possible despatch, and be careful not to use any amusing words, or to utter any conceits likely to make people laugh.....In writing, I will never make use of any ridiculous expressions, which give little

edification to one's neighbor, but will express myself with such sedateness as though my letters were to be read in the public street."

That which he had promised our Lord, he was most faithful to observe; and therefore he never failed to use those means necessary to arm himself against occasions. Although he was short-sighted and on this account unlikely to be surprised by seductive objects, nevertheless when he was obliged to talk to people of the other sex, he invariably kept his eyes lowered, and expressed himself in the fewest possible words. To the same end, even when he was a bishop, he kept his flesh under by means of mortification. Among his resolutions we find one in which he bound himself never to say Mass without wearing a hair-shirt. Although a man of his temperament would naturally require an abundant diet, he was extremely careful not to exceed the quantity barely necessary. In drinking, too, he was very moderate, and mixed a great deal of water with the little wine he took. In a word, he neglected nothing to preserve the lily of which he had made an offering to our Lord.

How diligent he was in submitting himself to the will and judgment of others, is revealed by the promptitude with which he blindly obeyed his superiors under all circumstances. We may say that as a simple religious he hardly ever had a fixed habitation, nevertheless he refused no duty, although he must often have seen the difficulties and trials he would have to encounter by obeying. No wonder that our holy Founder should write to Fr. Fulgentius in these terms: "Father Thomas

—oh, what a good man he is ! How much he works and suffers ! He writes to me by every post. He makes great spiritual progress and profits by what I, poor creature, write him from time to time. He tells me that he would give his life for the Congregation, and works very hard in the present emergencies.”

And this humble deference he never failed to exercise, no matter how far distant the field of his labors. Would that it had pleased heaven that those numerous letters which were exchanged between our holy Founder and Fr. Thomas had been preserved ; but the good bishop, before returning to Rome, burned them all to lighten his baggage, while St. Paul did not keep those he had received, perhaps because they were concerned with matters of conscience. However, one at least of these has been preserved, and it will illustrate what we have been saying. After having given some particulars of his journey and sufferings, he relates how he has been obliged by the Pope's orders to accept the nomination of bishop ; and then he adds :

“With all this I protest that I am a member of the Congregation, of which I acknowledge your Most Reverend Paternity to be the head, to whom I protest and profess my obedience, hoping in this state to be able to help the Congregation more than before, if God gives me life and brings me back to *terra firma*. Owing to this change, it is necessary that your Most Reverend Paternity send me a dispensation from the vow of poverty, for which I believe you have obtained faculties from the Pope. I beg you also to tell me whether I may now wear a linen shirt or whether I ought to

continue to use a woollen one. Now that I have need of many prayers, I implore your Most Reverend Paternity and all the Congregation to pray my conduct may be blameless in the sight of God. I trust that this news may please your Paternity, which I tell you now, not having been able to do so before, owing to the secrecy laid upon me. I beg you to give me your instructions which will serve me in place of a rule; and your letters will give me, as usual, that great comfort so necessary in my laborious occupation. Let it be remembered that I was the first Provincial, the first Procurator General, and now the first Bishop of the Congregation, for whose exaltation I will not cease to pray. My reverence to Fr. John Baptist and to all those good religious; and as I kiss your holy hands with all homage I subscribe myself, your Most Reverend Paternity's most humble and devoted servant and subject, Tommaso Struzzieri, Bishop of Tiene. Corsica, January 2nd, 1765."

With this letter let us close the present chapter, as being sufficient in itself to prove what has been said of the subjection, deference and respect which the servant of God always cherished towards his lawful superiors.



CHAPTER XIII.

HIS LOW OPINION OF HIMSELF, AND
SOLICITUDE FOR OTHERS.

OUR review of the virtues of the servant of God would be incomplete were we to pass over in silence his example in that which is the founda-

tion and touch-stone of all the others, namely, the virtue of humility. The memoirs tell us that he had the lowest opinion of himself, and although he knew how richly our Lord had endowed him with gifts, both natural and supernatural, he nevertheless kept constantly before his eyes the truth of his own nothingness. We find proof of this in his inclination always to keep himself hidden and retired, and in his resolution never to undertake anything unless bidden under obedience. His disregard of all human respect when the glory of God or the fulfilment of His will was in question; his intimate persuasion of the necessity of mortification and penance; the respect which he preserved all his life towards his superiors; in short, his whole conduct and outward demeanor inspired in all who saw him a certain meekness, sweetness and humility.

To descend a little to details, we may mention how, when he was a priest in the world, having just finished a mission with great applause at the Church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso in Rome, he was one day requested by the parish priest to assist him by ringing the bell at the end of the little procession which accompanied him as he carried the Blessed Sacrament to a sick person. The servant of God obeyed without a word, and walked through the streets with his eyes cast down, ringing the bell like a little serving-boy all the way until the procession returned to the Church. But, as he afterwards confessed to a friend, this act cost him much on account of the violence which he had to use to himself.

After he had joined the Congregation, he

eagerly sought humiliations of every kind; never losing an opportunity of accusing himself that he might be thought little of by others. Even as superior, he preferred worn and patched habits; and among his resolutions we read: "In the Retreat I will never ask anyone to do me a service, having entered the Congregation not to be waited upon, but to serve others." And as soon as he knew that Mgr. Odi, bishop of Terracina, wished to resign his See in his favor, he used all possible means until he succeeded in persuading the prelate to change his mind. He also did his best to obtain exemption from holding any office in the Congregation. In fact, in 1753, he presented a memorial to Pope Benedict XIV, that he might not be obliged to accept any kind of superiority, alleging that the Congregation was sufficiently supplied with subjects able to govern it; that he had become a religious solely because he wished to live in retirement; that he believed himself unfit to bear responsibility of any kind, and that he desired to be free from all encumbrance in order to devote himself exclusively to missions. By good fortune the matter was referred to the Superior General, with permission to exempt the petitioner for six years, so long as the Congregation was not prejudiced thereby. Needless to say the wish of God's servant was ignored. Our Lord, who humbles the proud and exalts the lowly, disposed that in the Chapter which was then being held, Fr. Thomas should be elected Provincial, and that subsequently he should be raised to even more important offices, as we have already seen.

But if Fr. Thomas was so opposed to anything

like esteem or honor to his own person, he was quite otherwise where the good, and especially the spiritual advantage, of his neighbor was concerned. As long as he lived in the Congregation, whoever sought his counsel found in him the heart of an affectionate father and tender mother, who sent everyone away consoled and satisfied. The same happened to seculars who flocked to him during his missions, when he was always all things to all men. As bishop, he took advantage of his dignity to give still wider scope to his charitable inclinations, and lived on as little as possible, that he might have the more to give to the poor, for whose sake he would even pawn the furniture of his house.

Where, however, his heart enlarged itself without limit, was in helping the spiritual necessities of others. Once he saw that he could render any assistance, he forgot all about himself, caring nought for his own convenience, inclination or repose. Sought for to hear confessions, he was always ready; asked for advice, he never withheld; begged to preach, he never refused.

Sometimes, in the course of his missions, he met with severe trials. For instance, while he was a secular priest, he went to give a mission in a certain district of the Abruzzi, where the people made him anything but welcome. In vain did he try to soften their hearts, until, finally, every effort useless, he publicly took off his shoes, shook the dust from them and departed. Wonderful to relate, the people, moved by this act, followed him along the road, begging him to return and give the mission. In a moment his charity was re-

kindled. He returned back, began to preach again, and with greater fruit than ever in his life before.

At another place, after he had become a religious, the heads of the people opposed the mission, alleging, in excuse, that there was no place wherein to lodge the Fathers. But the servant of God was not one to give way before an obstacle of that kind, and so miss an opportunity of doing good to many poor souls. He and his companions simply took a little bread for their supper on the first evening and set out on the mission. As soon as they arrived at their destination, they made their way to the Church, where Fr. Thomas mounted the pulpit and preached the introductory sermon. Inviting them all to come to hear God's word, he explained to the people that the only object the missionaries had in view was the good of souls; that as to their lodging, they had already decided to go to the Hospice of the poor; they had also brought some bread with them sufficient for that evening; and all they asked was that some devout person would bring them a little water to drink. So saying, he went with his companions to the Hospice where, very soon, so many offerings poured in that they were obliged to refuse them. The Baron of the district sent to invite them to lodge in his palace; but the good missionary was firm and preferred to remain in the hospice until the mission was over.



CHAPTER XIV.

HIS SINGULAR PRUDENCE IN GOVERNING.

JUDGED by outward appearances, Fr. Thomas might have been taken, by those who did not know him, for a very simple man: for in matters which did not concern him and in themselves of little account, he seemed like a child; he was almost credulous, and did not resist when others wanted their own way. But in the concerns of his office and in affairs of real importance, especially when it was a question of preventing evil and doing good, he was all eyes to see, all mind to weigh and consider, all prudence in the use of those means which he judged expedient to the desired end. The reader has already seen the happy results which he achieved in his many and various undertakings, and is therefore able to form some idea of the sagacity and rare prudence which adorned the character of the servant of God. This idea may be confirmed by some examples.

While still living in the Congregation, he was obliged, as we have seen, to fill successively the offices of Rector, Provincial, and Procurator General, in all of which he succeeded admirably. The memorals relate that he had a wonderful method of getting information and a thorough understanding of things without letting anyone know how he obtained it. When it was his duty to advise or correct anyone as to his defects, he went to work very slowly and was accustomed to wait for a suitable opportunity, lest the person concerned

should suspect that he had been informed by others. Once, when he reminded a religious of a small fault, the latter attempted some form of justification and gave signs of having taken the correction badly, the prudent superior merely replied: "I will take care for the future not to advise you." These words so touched the heart of that religious that he wished at all costs to go and find his superior who was then twenty-five miles distant, to ask his pardon.

His sagacity and prudence were still further brought out in his episcopal government, carried on, as we have seen, especially in Corsica, under most difficult circumstances. Pope Clement XIV used to say: "Mgr. Struzzieri is a great man; because he contrived with his prudence to get the better of the French and Corsicans, and to preserve the rights of the Holy See in the midst of many vicissitudes." For this reason the Pontiff had determined to send him as Nuncio into Poland which was in a state of great disorder: though he forebore to carry out this intention owing to the bishop's advanced age which he feared would not be proof against the rigors of the climate.

Truly wonderful was the way in which the servant of God combined his prudence with gentleness and firmness as occasion might demand. He himself mentioned, on his return to Rome, that the General commanding the French troops in Corsica, evinced a great affection and esteem for him, notwithstanding the fact that he had often been obliged to oppose this General's pretensions.

During his residence in Amelia, a certain persorage arrived, bringing with him a chaplain who

scandalized everybody by his strange attire. To remedy this, the bishop called upon the personage in question and said to him in all freedom and humility: "God knows how I have worked, and at last with success, to establish order among my clergy; but now your chaplain comes with his scandalous mode of dress to destroy all; it is your business, therefore, to find a remedy." And happily a remedy was applied.

There was a certain monastery in the diocese in which it was highly necessary to restore some kind of observance; but it was very difficult to get the nuns to accept the needful regulations. What did the bishop do? He went one day to the convent, and reasoned fervently with the nuns, whom, at the close of his discourse, he exhorted to put in practice a brief Rule which he set down in writing. The religious having read it, and seen that it asked comparatively little of them, and that this little was all contained on a small sheet of paper, accepted the bishop's proposal immediately, and in such a way that the most essential and important matters were at once put in order.

In another monastery the young lady pupils used to wear certain high caps in accordance with the prevailing fashion. This vanity displeased the bishop, who accordingly said to the superior: "Mother Abbess, I beg you to make these young ladies' caps a little lower, because I see that high caps make them look ugly, and it is not well that they appear ugly." The bishop then left, and shortly after he reached home, a person arrived from the monastery with a large basket in which

were all the caps, as well as a message to the effect that the young ladies did not intend to wear them again.

On taking possession of the See of Amelia, he found great discord among the nobility of the district, and soon saw that as long as this lasted, he could hope to do but little good among the people. But he quietly bethought himself of an expedient of asking all the nobles to dine with him to celebrate his arrival, but without letting any of them know the names of the other guests. The plan succeeded admirably; because, while they ate and talked, he gently sowed the seed of peace and Christian concord; and before they left the house the bishop had the consolation of seeing them all reconciled.

The reader will perhaps recall the fact that as a simple religious, Fr. Thomas founded our Retreats in Marittima and Campagna not without meeting with many trials and difficulties. Besides the threats which reached him from Rome, he knew that his adversaries had addressed to the Pope a satirical memorial about him. A copy of this document reached his hands while he was giving a mission at Alatri, and he immediately sent it to our holy Founder, whom he begged not to be annoyed, because he himself had been highly diverted by it.

With the same firmness of purpose he corrected and rooted up abuses wherever he found them. After having used gentle methods to no purpose, he adopted more serious measures, regardless of human respect. When in Corsica, he used the censures of the Church against eleven

magistrates in a single day, because they opposed the exercise of his spiritual ministry. And at Amelia, he did not hesitate to administer public correction to certain women who would not desist from open scandal. In another district of the same diocese, he imprisoned in her own house a woman who, through jealousy, had insulted a companion, and was deaf to the persuasions of one of our missionaries, who tried to induce her to let her rival attend the sermons in peace. He went even further in the case of a young noble of evil life, who, in spite of the bishop's entreaties, refused to mend his ways. The prelate thereupon sent for the young man's father and warned him that, failing amendment, the delinquent would be arrested. And the threat was put into execution. On this subject the bishop would remark: "Justice ought to be equal for all, otherwise the poor are right in complaining."

Another time, having with all charity admonished an ecclesiastic not to walk arm in arm with women, seeing that this warning had no effect, he suspended him; and prayers and mediation notwithstanding, he refused to revoke the sentence. He was much averse to anything like exceptions of persons, considering only the merit of each one, and paying no attention to the recommendations of important persons.



CHAPTER XV.

HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

HAVING now reviewed the principal virtues of this servant of God, it only remains to tell how he finished his days in this miserable vale of tears. He had now reached the age of seventy-three years, and the gout which had troubled him for a long time began to attack him with greater frequency and severity. He had also suffered many strokes of paralysis or rather apoplexy, which, however, did not affect his senses, or his power of motion, much less his intellectual faculties, although they greatly weakened him. At length, in August, 1780, the gout became so violent as to bring him, to all appearance, very near to death, and on the morning of All Saints' day the Holy Viaticum was administered, having been solemnly brought to him by the Chapter, escorted by a crowd of the faithful. The Prelate, all recollected in God, forced himself, in spite of the violence of his pains, to speak as well as he could, asking pardon of all, recommending mutual peace and concord, and, for the quiet of his conscience, would not omit to remind a certain prebendary of some shortcoming in the discharge of his office. He then received the Bread of Angels, and immediately afterwards showed signs of improvement. The change, however, was only temporary. On the morrow he was seized with fits of sobbing, which lasted for nine days: until on the morning of the 21st of November, paralysis supervened and everyone expected the bishop's dissolution.

During all this time, to the general admiration, he preserved perfect quiet and unconcern.

But our Lord, who is accustomed to purge and refine, like gold in the crucible, the souls most dear to Him, before making them worthy to receive the reward which he has prepared for them, willed that His servant should pass through the trials reserved for His most chosen ones. In the early days of November, the dying bishop was assailed with distressing scruples, from which he sought refuge in frequent confession and in the repetition of acts of humility, repentance and of the love of God. He had also forced himself to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice every morning to fortify himself against these assaults, though with all his efforts he could not entirely rid himself of his spiritual darkness, and so he remained until the beginning of January. On the 12th of that month, those about him advised him to go and visit the body of a Capuchin Father who had just died in the odor of sanctity. The aged prelate, perhaps foreseeing the result, was at first unwilling to go, but finally consented. On his return he suffered further strokes of apoplexy which continued through the night, depriving him of power of clear speech. The doctors, who seemed to have considered their patient as under the influence of hypochondria, did not even think it necessary to order the administration of the Viaticum. But they were quickly undeceived. The patient entered into a state of lethargy, though without losing his lucidity of mind. It was, however, impossible for him to receive Holy Communion, and he was obliged to be content with Extreme

Unction, which was given while the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the Cathedral. At the precise moment when the Host was uplifted in Benediction, the bishop passed away at the age of seventy-four years nine months and nine days.

As soon as the body was exposed in the hall of the episcopal residence, the people flocked in crowds to see the remains of their beloved pastor. On all sides were heard exclamations: "Blessed man!.....He died a Saint!" Great, also, was the anxiety to obtain some portion of his vestments or similar souvenirs. The body remained supple and flexible as in life, and far from inspiring horror, was, on the contrary, an object of tender devotion: the most timid approached and kissed the hands. The lying in state having lasted for four days, the body was carried in procession to the Cathedral by the shortest route, heavy rain preventing the progress through the city, usual on such occasions. After the Requiem had been sung, and funeral prayers recited by the Provost of the Chapter, the bishop was buried under the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Upon his breast was placed the badge of the Passion which he had always worn under his episcopal dress; and a brief account of his life, written on parchment, and cased in a leaden tube, was enclosed in the coffin. In the bishop's will, it was found that his property amounted to no more than twelve hundred scudi, which he had divided among his servants, certain pious institutions and the Cathedral, to the Chapter of which he left the obligation of completing the baldacchino over the high altar, and of keeping every year the Feast of the Passion.

Thus ended the mortal career of Mgr. Thomas Struzzieri, who left behind him a glorious reputation as a great minister of the Divine Word, but was more eminent still on account of his extraordinary and heroic virtues. Well may we say of him that he was a perfect model in all the states he passed through; in his adolescence, for young people and clerics, in his youth for priests, in his manhood for religious, and in his old age for prelates. As a superior he was distinguished for his largeness of mind and generosity of heart; he was unwearied in promoting the glory of God; for the good of the Congregation he spared neither fatigues nor cares; to succor his neighbor he thought nothing of sacrifice; while to procure his own salvation he neglected no available means. So that for every reason we owe him boundless gratitude, and we have, besides, all sufficient grounds for believing that, now in heaven among the Saints, he is our intercessor before God, to obtain for us the grace of imitating his virtues on earth and of one day following him in a blessed eternity.





Fr. Joseph of Our Lady's Dolors.

CHAPTER I.

HIS YOUTH, AND VOCATION TO RELIGION.

FATHER JOSEPH was born on the twenty-first of November, 1727, at Ponte S. Quirico near Lucca. His parents, Pio del Re and Caterina Morelli, were devout Christians. His father died when he was very young, and the widow married again. Happily the boy's step-father loved him as his own son and watched most carefully over his education.

Joseph corresponded to this solicitude by applying himself seriously to study; and in due time was sent by his step-father to a school in the city of Lucca, returning home every day when classes were over. Fortunate boy, who by this arrangement of his step-father, thus escaped many dangers in which incautious innocence is too often shipwrecked. We are told in the memoirs that on his way to and from school he always walked alone in silence, and that on holidays he enjoyed staying quietly at home where he occupied himself in study or in exercises of devotion, never omitting on festivals to attend Church and receive the holy Sacraments.

It was not difficult to foresee the state of life which a youth of this kind would embrace. At the age of nineteen he had finished his course of literature, including rhetoric, and was now aware that the time had arrived for this momentous decision. He was not long in making up his mind to consecrate himself entirely to God in the safe harbor of holy religion.

About this time he heard of the new Institute of the Passion, and at once felt himself attracted to join the number of those generous souls who were among the first to make trial of its rule. He therefore wrote to our holy Founder, who, seeing in the manner of the postulant's request, the signs of a true vocation, accepted him without difficulty and called him to Monte Argentaro, where he arrived in June, 1746. Here he found a flourishing novitiate under the direction of Fr. Marcus Aurelius, whose teachings he assimilated so quickly that he soon became an example to all the novices by his modesty, gravity and scrupulous observance of the Rule, while at the same time he gained the affection of the religious, who saw in him the promise of great things.

At the end of his year of novitiate, he was received to profession on June 21st, 1747, the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, to whom he had a special devotion. He pronounced his vows with unspeakable content, making with great fervor a complete sacrifice of himself to God.



CHAPTER II.

HIS STUDIES AT S. ANGELO'S RETREAT.

OUR Institute was still in process of formation, and matters were but half decided and arranged. It was on this account that the newly professed novice had to wait five months at Monte Argentaro before he could be sent to a house of formal studies. At the end of December all things were made ready at the Retreat of S. Angelo near Vetralla, and he, together with some companions, were sent thither to begin a regular course of philosophy and theology. The students were accompanied by Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who had been appointed to direct their studies. Nothing could have been more propitious for the progress of this fervent youth in spirituality as well as in science, under a master who knew so well how to combine piety and doctrine, love of virtue with solicitude in study. The young neophyte found himself also under the watchful eye of our holy Founder, who lived at S. Angelo, where, at the same time, Fr. John Baptist, his brother, was Rector.

We read in the memoirs that this holy community was at that time like a novitiate-house, so scrupulous was the exactitude of each of its members in the observance of the Rules. The mitigations subsequently introduced were not then in force. Daily fasting was the rule, and everyone went barefoot, taking his share in the humblest and most fatiguing domestic duties with perfect abnegation. Confrater Joseph usually acted as

sacristan, and such was his activity that he found time not only to keep the Church in good order, but to cultivate flowers for use on the altar.

So ready was his obedience, and so unalterable his cheerfulness and unconcerned under all circumstances, that his superiors called him "the indifferent," while his excellent example to all his companions earned for him the nick-name of "the novice master." Having been told under obedience to prepare and preach a sermon on Christmas day, he composed a discourse and made ready to deliver it. But when the moment arrived, he was so overcome with fear and confusion that, after having said a few words, he was unable to proceed. Any one else would be greatly cast down at such a failure; but Joseph was not in the least disturbed, and having understood that the Rector wished him to prepare another sermon for the next festival, he promptly obeyed. But this time he succeeded to admiration. And it was perhaps in reward for this docility that he afterwards received from God the gift of the word, which enabled him even when suddenly called upon to preach in a wonderful manner.



CHAPTER III.

HIS ORDINATION: CALLED TO THE RETREAT OF
TERRACINA, AND AFTERWARDS TO CECCANO.

JOSEPH'S rapid progress in his studies as well as in virtue soon rendered him fit, in the opinion of his superiors, to be ordained. Letters

dimissorial were therefore procured for him from Lucca, according to the custom of that day, and in August, 1751, he received the tonsure and minor orders at the hands of the bishop of Orvieto. In the following month he was ordained subdeacon by the same prelate, as his own diocesan—the bishop of Viterbo—was holding no ordination that autumn. The journeys to and from Orvieto involved much fatigue, for they were made on foot.

In the November of the same year an order came from our holy Founder, who was then giving missions, that Confrater Joseph and some other religious were to go to Terracina, there to form part of the community in the new Retreat which was then approaching completion. Confrater Joseph waited for no second command, but, notwithstanding the severity of the season, at once began his journey, and having passed through Rome, went to the Retreat of Ceccano, which was still unfinished, there to await further orders before proceeding to his destination. During his stay at Ceccano, he was ordained deacon in December by the bishop of Ferentino, and after some weeks departed for Terracina, where he found our holy Founder and his brother, Fr. John Baptist.

On the 5th of February, 1752, solemn possession was taken of the new Retreat at Terracina, which was dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. The function was very devout, but the memoirs relate that the religious assigned to this Retreat had to endure many troubles owing to the smallness and poverty of the place. Their choir had to serve as the public church; there were only few

habitable cells, the others being unfinished; and in order to live at all, the religious had to take turns in the quest. Our Joseph, however, was imperturbable as usual, meeting all difficulties in a cheerful spirit. Thinking nothing of fatigues and the burden of observance, he added thereto an insatiable ardor for study.

In the same month of February, after having passed the preliminary examination, he was ordained priest by the bishop of Terracina. At the same time he was found so well equipped with theological knowledge, and so well grounded in virtue, that he received faculties to hear the confessions of men. The servant of God put himself wholly into the hands of his superiors, and on the feast of the Annunciation, which in that year, fell in Holy Week, he exercised for the first time the ministry of helping the soul of his neighbor. Our holy Founder was the first to congratulate the newly consecrated priest, and said to him during recreation time: "Good sign; good sign: you have begun your apostolic ministry on a great day; the day on which was inaugurated the stupendous work of our Redemption."

Having spent the spring and summer at Terracina, he was recalled at the beginning of winter to the Retreat near Ceccano, where his superiors wished him to assist in the establishment of that foundation, then in its infancy. And in fact, in the General Chapter held in the Retreat of S. Angelo, in March, 1753, when the erection of the new Province of Campagna was agreed upon, the Capitular Fathers, having been informed of the excellent gifts of the servant of God, did not hesitate

to elect him Rector of the Retreat at Ceccano, besides nominating him to the office of second Provincial Consultor, a choice not a little remarkable, since Fr. Joseph had not yet completed his twenty-sixth year. But he fully answered the expectations which had been formed of him and discharged the duties of his offices with such prudence as to satisfy everybody. At this time, likewise, he began to take his part in mission work of the Congregation with all the success of an experienced missionary.



CHAPTER IV.

IS EMPLOYED IN VARIOUS OFFICES:
RESIDENCE IN ROME.

AFTER three years Fr. Joseph again went to the Retreat of S. Angelo for the Chapter, in which our holy Founder manifested his desire that he should undertake the duties of Novice-master, in place of Fr. Fulgentius who had passed to his eternal repose; but it was not possible to obtain his consent. However, this attitude helped him but little in his desire to be left in tranquillity, for the Capitular Fathers elected him Rector of the new Retreat of S. Mary near Paliano, where he had to labor and to suffer much, as is usually the case in new foundations. Notwithstanding, he did not disappoint the expectations formed of his ability, so that he was reappointed for a second term of three years.

Our Lord, however, who willed to exact from him complete submission and indifference to sacrifices of every kind, disposed that before the expiration of this second term of office, his superiors should be compelled by circumstances to call upon him to undertake the duties of Novice-master at Monte Argentaro. Fr. Joseph had not the courage to offer further resistance to the dispositions of Divine Province, and immediately consenting, set out to enter upon his new responsibilities. But it seemed as though our Lord was satisfied with this act of submission, since the superiors were obliged, owing to the necessities of those early days, to add to his burden the office of Rector of the Retreat, which position he held until the end of the three years; though a little before the expiration of that time he was freed from the office of Novice-master, because the novitiate was to be transferred to the new Retreat of St. Joseph. In the Chapter of 1762, it was necessary to find a man capable of sustaining the difficulties of the new foundation on Monte Cavo, and Fr. Joseph was unanimously chosen. This time also the servant of God willingly accepted the burden laid upon him, and remained for three years in that desolate and inconvenient spot, amid a thousand sufferings of every kind.

In the year of 1767, our holy Founder opened a hospice near S. John Lateran, dedicated to the Holy Crucifix, to serve as a residence for the Procurator General to transact the business of the Congregation with the Holy See. It was necessary to provide the Fr. Procurator with a companion, and St. Paul of the Cross judged that no

one was fitter for the post than Fr. Joseph, of whose virtue he had already so many proofs. Therefore relieving him of all his other employments, he sent him to Rome, where he was present at the opening of the hospice on the Friday within the octave of the Epiphany.

The hospice in question consisted of nothing more than a small house of very few rooms divided one from the other by matting. There were also a few rooms of the same kind under the level of the ground. On the very day of the inauguration Fr. Joseph was attacked by fever, and shortly afterwards, by reason of some work which was still going on in the building, he was afflicted by a painful malady of the eyes, which for a time endangered his sight. Nevertheless the fervent Father made no complaint, nor would he consent to change his room. Where he was lodged the first night, that is to say, in a little room half under ground and darkened by the shrubs of the garden close by, there he remained for seven years.

His duties during all this time, in addition to the community exercises, to which he was always the first to come, consisted in the care of the little oratory annexed to the house, and in studying to render himself always better equipped for the sacred ministry. He often went out to give the spiritual exercises in monasteries, or to preach and hear confessions in the neighboring hospital of S. Giovanni, and was, besides, always ready to go where he was sent, ever docile and full of zeal. For this reason, perhaps, notwithstanding his election in 1769 to be second Provincial Consultor of the Province of Marittima and Campagna, and

in 1772, to govern the Province of the Patrimony of S. Peter, his superiors thought well to leave him in the hospice, all the more because they recognized that his presence there was an advantage to the Congregation. On the occasion of the jubilee celebrated by Pope Clement XIV, he was chosen to give the catechetical instructions in the mission which was held in Basilica of S. Maria in Trastevere, a duty which he discharged so well that he was called "a river of eloquence." He also gave missions in the dioceses of Anagni, Spoleto, Amelia, Montefiascone, Corneto and Terracina; and wherever he preached, he produced much fruit and won many souls to Christ.



CHAPTER V.

RECTOR OF SS. JOHN AND PAUL: THEN PROVINCIAL.

IN the May of 1775, our holy Founder, foreseeing his approaching end, wished to have the consolation of seeing once again all the superiors of the Congregation and to give them some last remembrance. For this purpose he arranged that both the Provincial and the General Chapters should be held in Rome. It was on this occasion that he declared the Retreat of SS. John and Paul to be part of the Province of the Patrimony of St. Peter, besides being the residence of the General and the head of all the other Retreats. It was therefore necessary, in conformity with the holy Rule, to elect a Rector, and the choice fell upon Fr. Joseph,

who received the news of his appointment with much regret. It could hardly be otherwise with a man so devoted to retirement and study who now saw himself once more obliged to occupy himself with outside affairs, which in the Retreat at Rome are apt to be not only numerous but complicated. Nevertheless, the servant of God resigned himself to the Divine will, although the effort cost him not a little, if only on account of his health, which was far from satisfactory. His strength, sustained as it was by his singular fervor, proved equal, however, to the burden, and at the end of his term of office, he had won the praise of all as a most observant superior.

The Congregation, in the following General Chapter, decided to employ his excellent qualities in a wider field, electing him Provincial of Marittima and Campagna. Fr. Joseph, with his usual humility and obedience, once more bent his neck to the yoke, and did not disappoint the confidence thus placed in him. He changed his office, but not his heart, nor his way of life; and while he made himself all things to all men, he retained for himself only responsibility and fatigue. At all times a strict upholder of regular observance, as Provincial he was unexceptionable in this respect. He had only to make his appearance, even as a passing visitor, in any of the Retreats, and the house became a model of regularity and fervor; it used to be said that this excellent superior had no need to hold a visitation, but only to show himself, and the disappearance of any of those discords or irregularities which are practically inseparable from community life, was a thing as-

sured. So true is that saying of St. Bernard that the preaching of example is the most efficacious.

Nor in the midst of the cares of his office did he omit to give missions: indeed, all his time which was not occupied in visitations, was completely filled up with apostolic labors. In the course of this three years he travelled over great part of the dioceses of Terracina, Anagni, Ferentino, and Gaeta, with immense fruit. Eloquent as he was, his preaching was invariably accompanied by his example which edified and touched the heart even more than his words.

It is not surprising that his government was so appreciated that at the end of his term of office he was reappointed Provincial in the Chapter of 1781. Our Lord, who, in the course of this second three years, willed to call Fr. Joseph to Himself, was pleased to give him first a special consolation. Pope Pius VI having undertaken the draining of the Pontine Marshes, determined this year to visit the works in person, which he did in the month of April. He chose for his temporary residence the city of Terracina, and knowing that there was a Passionist Retreat in the neighborhood, chose Fr. Joseph to be his confessor during the time of his sojourn there. Moreover, on the feast of the Invention of the Cross, he visited the Retreat for the purpose of saying Mass, on which occasion he showed how great was his esteem and affection for the religious and for Fr. Joseph in particular, to whom he gave abundant alms for the building of the Retreat, besides many spiritual graces for himself and for the Congregation.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME OF HIS PRINCIPAL VIRTUES.

NOT long after the visit of the Supreme Pontiff, Fr. Joseph was called by God to receive the reward of his labors and merits in heaven; but before describing the manner of his death, we will avail ourselves of the brief notes concerning him, which we find in the memoirs, to gather, as best we may, some adequate idea of his virtues.

As he had the privilege of being trained in the religious life under the eye of our holy Founder, he may be said to have shared his spirit; insomuch that although he was always burdened with official responsibilities, and often in the midst of difficult circumstances, he never failed to discharge his duties in a manner not only laudable but saintly. We may reduce to two, in particular, the virtues by means of which he remained always faithful to the spirit of his vocation, and ever ready to work for the greater glory of God; namely—a profound distrust of himself, accompanied by true docility and resignation, and a constant and diligent observance of the holy Rule.

We read, as to the first, that he had a lively knowledge of his own miseries, and a very low opinion of himself. According to him, he was fit neither to preach, to hear confessions, nor to do anything good; and it was noticed that when he went out to preach, he seemed quite depressed and confused. Then, he was most careful to conceal everything that might redound to his credit, while he was never better pleased in manifesting something which might bring him some humiliation. As we have already mentioned, Pope Pius VI,

during his visit to Terracina, chose Fr. Joseph to be his confessor. When the latter sent to Rome a detailed account of the Pope's visit, he did not allude to this fact, which was made known to his colleagues in the Eternal City by others. And another time, having mentioned in letter to Rome some instances of the Pope's kindness to him, he immediately sent a post-script begging pardon for having referred to such personal matters.

On the other hand, anyone who, without knowing him, had heard him accusing himself of his faults, would have taken him for a relaxed and tepid religious. The memoirs relate that his natural disposition was somewhat quick and sensitive: consequently when he was extremely busy it would sometimes happen that a harsh word or two escaped him; but the servant of God was quick to make of any such slip an occasion to humble himself, by asking pardon of the person whom he thought he might have hurt by his hasty speech. From this we see that Fr. Joseph based his conduct on the right principles of faith and virtue, and not on his natural inclinations.

He was gifted with a mind ever ready to seize any new idea, and he always knew what means to use to secure his object; nevertheless, even in the smallest and most unimportant matters, he was never precipitous, but took time to seek advice and to pray; and when it was time to act, he was always so ready to change his opinion and line of conduct, that the least sign from his superiors was sufficient to make him act otherwise. We learn that on one occasion a person who possessed his confidence was so imprudent as to say to him:

“You are too much of Father General’s opinion.” The humble Father immediately replied: “It is true, and I glory in it.” On the occasion of the Pope’s arrival at Terracina, he was absent giving a mission in the diocese of Ferentino. The Vice-General thought well to write to him that he had better return to the Retreat; and he immediately set out, although he knew that his presence was not necessary, and that the mission would suffer by his absence. In fine, his one aim was to do God’s will, without minding anything else.

This was the source of his complete resignation to all that was required of him by holy obedience, in making small account of the difficulties, inconveniences and sufferings which he was called upon to endure in his journeys hither and thither; and let it be remembered that he nearly always travelled on foot, and was afflicted at the same time by serious illnesses. It was one of his practices to abandon himself to God, and to hope everything from God; he used, moreover, to say that the fear of God was most desirable, but if not kept within bounds it might become a temptation, and instead of bringing us nearer to God, would take us further away from Him. Such sentiments as these invariably supported and encouraged him to bring to a happy ending any business he had in hand, and to preserve in him a spirit of fervor in regular observance worthy of a novice, as we shall see in the following chapter.



CHAPTER VII.

THE SAME CONTINUED.

TO illustrate Fr. Joseph's fidelity in the observance of the Rule, the reference made by the memoirs to this subject will be more than sufficient. There we read that if anyone wanted to learn the Rule of the Congregation without a book, he had only to notice Fr. Joseph's conduct, so exact and punctual was he in every particular. And this exactitude was the more remarkable because he was almost always occupied in business of a distracting nature. Notwithstanding he was always one of the first to be present for the performance of any community duty. In one Retreat it was noticed, while he was Provincial, that to incite the religious to punctuality in rising for matins at midnight, he would enter the choir almost as soon as the clock struck, and light the lamps before the arrival of the religious appointed for that purpose. He always set his face against distinctions in community life, and would only tolerate them in case of sickness; and when he himself was sick or convalescent he was content with that which was given him by the charity of his brethren, to the great edification of them all.

In the matter of retirement and silence, which are so characteristic of our Institute, his conduct was unexceptionable. His delight was to stay in his cell, and to live totally dead to the world. He was filled with zeal for the spiritual health of his neighbor, and it might be said of him that a great part of his life was devoted to this end, without stint of trouble or fatigue. At the same time he

never took upon himself to go where he was not sent, or to mix himself up in affairs foreign to his vocation, much less on that account to claim exemptions and privileges. He went out to work, discharged his duty with incomparable zeal and charity, and then returned to the Retreat to resume the exercises of community life as before.

Nor can it be said that his heart was attached to anyone; on the contrary, one of his maxims was: "to be all things to all men to gain all to Jesus Christ; but never to the detriment of the observance of the holy Rule, or my own spiritual profit." Another saying of his was: "I have noticed that the religious who secularize themselves too much and attach themselves to seculars, sooner or later lose their vocation." We also read that when he went out of the house, he walked with the grave and modest demeanor beseeing a fervent novice, and that the mere sight of him edified and softened the hearts of all who beheld him. On one occasion, during a mission, he was lodged with his companions in the house of a benefactor, whose wife, noticing his singular modesty, and especially the watch he kept over his sight, did her best to detect him with his eyes raised. But she was totally unsuccessful, although Fr. Joseph was her guest for eighteen days. This fact greatly edified the good woman whose attachment to the Congregation became so strong that she lost no opportunity thenceforward of entertaining our Fathers in her house.

The same spirit of recollection and retirement he exacted from his subjects when he was superior, for which reason he was unwilling to send them

outside the Retreat, except on occasions of real necessity. On the other hand, that the religious might have no ground for discontent, it was his wish, that in conformity with the holy Rule, they should lack none of the things which is allowed them. It cannot be said that he offended against the poverty proper to our Institute, but at the same time he ran no risk of meanness; on the contrary, we read that he would sometimes incur debts in order to supply the needs of the community. So that, if on the one hand, he was exacting in the matters of observance, on the other, he well knew the duties required of him: and if, when occasion arose, he did not omit to counsel and correct without human respect, because he did so from proper motives and in the right way, everyone respected and loved him. Small wonder, then, if, as the memoirs tell us, no one ever had reason to complain of him.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

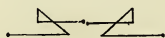
HAVING noticed the principal virtues of Father Joseph, we must now pass on to describe his happy passage to the other life, which took place in May, 1781, not long after the visit of Pope Pius VI to the Retreat of Terracina. It seemed that our Lord granted him a presentiment of the event, because a few months previously, when he received the news of his brother's death, he remarked to

his consultor, Fr. Vincent of S. Andrew: "For me, too, there is little time." And not long after, he said to a holy priest who advised him to fix his residence at Terracina: "For me there is only a little life left: I do not know if I shall finish this year." Finally, before setting out for the above mentioned mission at Pontecorvo, he wrote to Rome that he felt much indisposed and that he feared something: and on the point of departure he turned to Fr. Jerome of S. Secundus, saying to him: "Good bye, Fr. Jerome, we shall not meet again." And so it happened.

On May the thirteenth he arrived at Pontecorvo, and the mission promised to end as happily as it had begun, when on the evening of Sunday the twenty-seventh, as the servant of God was heated with preaching to a great crowd in the open square, he felt a sudden chill from a strong wind which was blowing. When he came down from the platform, his voice left him, and he was obliged to discontinue his sermons, although he persevered in hearing confessions for two days. But on the following Thursday, while his companions were conducting the reconciliation preparatory to the general communion, one of them who had remained in the house to hear a man's confession, heard moanings in Fr. Joseph's room. He ran at once to his door, and on opening it saw the servant of God hanging almost out of bed and half unconscious. With the assistance of the lay brother he was placed in bed, but it was soon evident that a stroke of apoplexy had deprived him of the power of speech and had affected the whole of his body except the head. One of his com-

panions, aware of the gravity of the illness, heard his confession while the doctors were sent for, and the stricken man answering all the questions by signs, manifested sincere devotion and resignation. The physician and surgeon having arrived, it was decided to bleed his left arm; but the result was so far from favorable, that the sufferer nearly lost the use of his senses. Extreme Uncion was therefore administered before evening.

During the night there was no notable change except that the Father was shaken from time to time by strong convulsions; but on Friday morning he was so much worse that the recommendation of a departing soul was read. The whole city was strongly moved at the sad tidings, from the Bishop to the lowest of the people. The missionaries' house was stormed by the crowds who wished to see once more the poor Father whom they esteemed so highly. Each one wished to possess himself of some keepsake and it was difficult to save any object in the room from their devout rapacity. At last, a little before mid-day, while one of his companions was reading the Passion according to St. John, amidst the prayers and tears of those who surrounded his bed, Fr. Joseph breathed forth his soul quiet and tranquil, as though in the act of going to sleep. His age was a little over fifty-three years, of which he had passed about thirty-three in religion.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS BURIAL; AND THE PRODIGIES WHICH FOLLOWED.

THE death of the servant of God occasioned unusual grief, and evoked numberless expressions of affection and devotion in the hearts of those in whose behalf his last efforts had been spent. To satisfy them it was necessary to distribute everything he had used. Indeed, indiscretion went so far as to cut off for this purpose much of his hair and a considerable portion of his habit. One person had the coffin made at his own expense, while another gentleman offered his chapel for the burial. The Father Guardian of the Capuchins wished the interment to take place in the Church of his convent, but the canons of the Cathedral prevailed with the bishop to allow the body to be buried in their own place of sepulture. Material difficulties, however, interfered with this plan and the offer of the Capuchins was therefore accepted.

When the hour arrived for the funeral ceremonies, Fr. Joseph's companions were anxious to carry out the customs of the Congregation, but such was the feeling in the city that all the religious bodies, the confraternities, the clergy in cottas, the canons in their cappas, the nobles in mourning, as well as a great mass of the population took part in the procession. As the bier was borne into the Church, the building rapidly filled, while the bishop took his place on the throne. Then was begun the office of the dead, followed by the Mass, and the absolution pronounced by

the bishop. At the close of the function it was intended to proceed at once to the burial, but this was not possible. It was necessary to give the people further opportunity of satisfying their devotion; and many of them waited hours for their turn to kiss the feet of the missionary who had given his life for their souls. Finally, towards evening, as traces of blood made their appearance on the lips, it was thought prudent to place the body in the coffin and to bury it. The chapel set apart for this purpose was in the left side of the Church, and the coffin was lowered into a space at the side of the altar of St. Ann. But on the subsequent foundation of a Retreat near Pontecorvo, our religious obtained permission to transfer the body to their own Church where it still remains.

The memoirs include some authentic account of various wonderful facts which took place at Pontecorvo, presumably owing to the intercession of the servant of God, and we think it may please the reader if we mention them here. A certain nun named Sister Maria Crocifissa Carocci had suffered for four years from a painful swelling above the joints which almost entirely prevented her from kneeling or standing. Some time after Fr. Joseph's death, she felt a desire, together with a lively faith, to win by his intercession the grace of a cure. She accordingly procured a portion of a habit which he had worn, and keeping it upon the part affected for three days, she recited every morning three Paters and Aves. At the end of the triduum she found herself completely cured, nor did she ever require further remedy.

In the same city a certain Cecilia Spertigliozzi had been troubled by a tumor on her right breast, for the space of a year, with a gland the size of an apple which gave her terrible pains, and made it impossible for her to work, or to lean or lie on her right side. The surgeons whom she had consulted agreed that an operation was necessary, but the very thought of it made the poor woman afraid. Just at this time she had been to confession to Fr. Joseph during the mission, and as soon as she heard of his death, she felt in her heart a firm confidence that she would be cured by his intercession. She therefore procured a piece of his habit and some cloths which had been used during his illness. These she placed on her breast praying that the grace of a cure might be granted to her through the merits of the servant of God. After two days she removed the covering from her breast, and to her great content and wonder found that the gland and every sign of disease had disappeared.

A similar grace was obtained by Maria Matassi, who had been tormented for many months by sciatica, and who in the opinion of the doctors, would very soon lose all power of motion. Some days after Fr. Joseph's death, she was advised to borrow a cap which the servant of God had used and to touch with it the part affected. The sick woman willingly consented, and found herself free from all pain and appearance of evil.

Alessandra Sisto after being confined in October, 1781, was seized with such sharp pains in her bowels and in her head that she could get no rest. She remained seated day and night with

her head bowed to the ground, unable to retain food or drink, so that all mourned her as one dead. However, one of her relatives felt himself inspired to advise her to swallow a minute piece of Fr. Joseph's habit, in the firm faith that she would be cured. The poor creature accepted the suggestion, and after drinking a few threads of the cloth in some water, she was immediately free from pain and felt perfectly healthy.

Theodora Carboni related that her devotion to Fr. Joseph who had died in her native place, induced her to obtain possession of a piece of his habit. This she cut in two, and sewed a portion into the clothes of each of her two sons, in the confidence that by the intercession of the servant of God they would be kept from harm. Now it happened one night, as they were walking through the city, they were attacked by some companions who struck one of the brothers on the head with a sword, while the other received a blow on the arm. One escaped with a mere scratch on the head and the other was not hurt at all.

These few facts, on which nevertheless we pronounce no judgment — for this belongs to ecclesiastical authority — suffice to persuade us that Fr. Joseph was truly a man of God, and that his life was truly holy. It is indeed possible that the reader, as he peruses the memoirs of this perfect religious, may think that the virtuous actions related of him to be not very numerous, but it must be borne in mind, as we have said before, that very few notes concerning the first companions of St. Paul of the Cross have come down to us: this explains all. For the rest, the wonder-

ful happenings after Fr. Joseph's death may well convince us that his exercise of virtue consisted not merely in the few facts which we have related concerning him, but that all his life was full of works holy and pleasing to God.





Father Anthony of Calvary.

CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY YEARS AND CALL TO RELIGION.

VERY few are the memoirs concerning Father Anthony of Calvary, for which reason we shall be brief in our account of his life. His name in the world was Tomassini, and he was born in 1703, at Mirandola, in the diocese of Reggio in Lombardy, of a very well known family. He had the great good fortune to be the son of parents who brought him up in the fear of God, encouraging the development of those good dispositions with which Providence had enriched his spirit. From his early youth his inclinations clearly directed him to study and the ecclesiastical state. He was first occupied with literature, then with philosophy and finally with theology; and at the age of twenty-three he was able, by apostolic indult, to be ordained priest.

About this time he one day visited the Duke of the Mirandola, a member of the Spanish court, who conceived such a liking for him that he wished the young priest to accompany him on his

return, in the capacity of tutor to the young nobles who were pages to the Queen, mother of the reigning monarch, Don Carlos. The Duke's offer was accepted, and having received his appointment, Don Anthony Tomassini set out for Madrid. Here he soon entered upon his duties with all zeal and fervor, instilling into the hearts of the youths under his charge the solid maxims not only of civil education but of Christian piety. And the memoirs relate that he was so exact and so free from human respect that where he knew correction was necessary he spared no one. How long he continued in this office is not known; he held it, undoubtedly, for many years, and we learn at least that, although he earned a great deal of money, he cared so little about it, that but for a private income, he would have been very badly off on his return to his native land. This return, we are led to suppose, was dictated by his weariness of court-life and by the consideration of the duties proper to the ecclesiastical state. Happy he, who hesitated but little to make up his mind! For our Lord awaited him in Mirandola, to point out to him the new way which led to his spiritual profit and sanctification.

At home once more, his first thought was to divide the patrimony with his brothers, and then to withdraw to some other place that he might live more quietly. The affair was concluded by mutual agreement and in perfect peace; and he chose Milan for his new residence. However, God was with him to draw him at last to His own loving designs, and the final incident which brought about this decision was not a little singu-

lar. Being without employment, he was accustomed during the hot hours of the summer days to repair to a barber's shop where he took part in the conversation, which was usually concerned with the ordinary topic of idle people—the news of the day. Now it happened one day that the barber was narrating certain circumstances connected with the war then in progress, Don Antonio interrupted him, saying: "I have heard more than enough of this sort of news: tell me something fresh." Then the good man began to relate the doings and holy fame of St. Paul of the Cross, and to speak of the wonderful missions he gave, and the Order which he had lately founded; and among other things he recounted how the servant of God had fixed his permanent residence on Monte Argentaro.

Don Antonio listened with great attention and pleasure to this unexpected news which moved him so much that as soon as he reached home he wrote to the servant of God not indeed with the intention of joining the new Institute, although he allowed some expressions to escape him which might have conveyed that idea. Our holy Founder, enlightened as he was, thought well, on reading the letter, to follow an inward impulse which urged him to tell his correspondent that he was ready to accept him, and advise him to put his affairs in order and come forthwith to Monte Argentaro.

On receipt of this reply, Don Antonio experienced an entire change of spirit. From that moment he began to give himself to prayer and works of piety; and, what was more, he felt him-

self called to the new Institute of the Passion. He no longer wrote to our holy Founder as on the first occasion, only half in earnest, but with truth, sincerity and good sense. As he afterwards related, on the one hand he felt the will to decide grow in him day by day, while on the other, melancholy and doubt assailed him more violently than ever; and having before him continually the extreme disparity between the life he had hitherto led and that which he thought of embracing, he hesitated in perplexity, without seeing how to free himself from uncertainty.

Well was it for him that in this dangerous embarrassment he continued to write to our holy Founder, giving him a clear account of all that was passing in his mind. The Saint was able to disperse all such doubts and fears, so that after a short time Don Antonio, feeling himself encouraged and full of faith in God, took a brave resolution, set out for Rome dressed as a pilgrim and travelled on foot. In this poor habit he covered the distance between Milan and Rome in a space of time so short as to surprise himself. It was his intention first to stay in the holy city that he might visit its chief sanctuaries and place himself under the patronage of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Having done this with great devotion, he continued his journey in the same manner to the Retreat of S. Angelo near Vetralla, where he thought to find our holy Founder and receive his blessing before going to the novitiate.



CHAPTER II.

HIS NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION.

ON his arrival at the Retreat of S. Angelo, Don Antonio found that our holy Founder had just set out for the house of the Congregation near Soriano. He was, however, received by Fr. John Baptist, brother of the Saint, who was at that time superior of the Retreat. Nothing could have been more opportune than this meeting, as a trial of the postulant's vocation. It was a principle with Fr. John Baptist that all candidates for the Institute should be well tried, and he certainly lost no time in putting his principle into practice in the case of Don Antonio. "Off with you;" he exclaimed as soon as he understood the object of the pilgrim's visit, "our life is not for you. You are already old, accustomed to delicate manners and to the Court. Our life requires something very different! You have given the flour to the world, and now you want to give the bran to Jesus Christ." So saying he gave Don Antonio some refreshment and then showed him up to bed. Next morning the Father said to his guest: "Now then, get your breakfast, and afterwards you can start on your way to the Retreat of St. Eutizio to talk to Fr. Paul, and then when you return home you will be able to say that you have seen two of our houses."

A reception of this kind was certainly the reverse of flattering, and little calculated to attract the heart of a man subject to melancholy, and who was still smarting under the pain of the spiritual conflict he had lately sustained. Never-

theless, Don Antonio listened in silence and quite unmoved. It was only when he was on the point of departure that he ventured on a kind of humble remonstrance. "Father," he said, "although I am no longer young, and have been brought up delicately, yet, for all that, I hope you will be able to lead me with a hair." At these words Fr. John Baptist changed from severity to kindness, as he replied: "Courage, Don Antonio, you will be an excellent religious and a true son of the Passion of Jesus Christ."

One may easily imagine how this sudden change raised the depressed spirit of the pious priest, who made his way with all speed to Soriano, where our holy Father received him with no ordinary signs of gladness. "Dear Don Antonio," said the Saint, "every time I wrote to you my guardian angel stood by me and guided my pen." And he kept the postulant with him for several days, giving him salutary advice and instruction; and then, as Fr. Fulgentius was going to Monte Argentaro to be Master of Novices, he sent him in company with that holy man to begin his novitiate.

Don Antonio entered upon his new life with such extraordinary dispositions that no sacrifice or austerity dismayed him, notwithstanding his forty-four years. He received the habit on the thirtieth of November, and from that moment his fervor never relaxed, while his observance of every rule was so untiring and exact that he became a model for all his young companions.

In the memoirs we find the following anecdote which illustrates the virtue of this fervent novice:

It was the rule of the Congregation at that time to fast every day, and Fr. Anthony, unaccustomed as he was to such continual mortification, found it exceedingly trying. It happened one morning that he had a strong desire to eat in advance of the specified time. Now, the Novice Master was accustomed to give an instruction to his disciples before the singing of Sext and None, after which the community went to table. Fr. Anthony, to hasten matters a little, put the hands of the clock on during the Master's discourse, to make it end the sooner. This he did several times, until at last, actuated by remorse, he accused himself of his fault in the refectory. The Novice Master did not fail to take advantage of this to try Fr. Anthony's virtue, and ordered, by way of penance, that while the others were eating he should go to the Church and pray. The novice took the penance so quietly that after having performed it he found himself completely cured of that imperfection, into which he never fell again.

At the close of the year of novitiate, he made his profession on December 3rd, 1748, after which he still remained for a few months in company with the novices. During this stay of his at Monte Argentaro we find recorded a fact worth mentioning. Fr. Anthony was tall, thin, and severe of aspect, and his bearing was invariably grave; and it would sometimes happen that when he was with the novices, some of them would be guilty of some slight fault. On such occasions, he, with his ardent nature, could not contain himself, and with one of his severe looks, or a sharp word, he would make them tremble more than the Master

himself. Notwithstanding this, although at first sight he seemed somewhat hard, yet, as he was so humble and so well mannered, his society was pleasant to all.



CHAPTER III.

HIS LIFE AS A PROFESSED RELIGIOUS: HIS VIRTUES.

DURING Father Anthony's residence at Monte Argentaro. his superiors saw that he possessed a certain aptitude for affairs, as a result of his long stay in the world; for which reason they often made use of him when occasion occurred to transact the external business of the Retreat. Our holy Founder himself would sometimes employ him to write his letters, and take him as companion on his missions as one whom he knew to be worthy the trust reposed in him. He was afterwards chosen as Vicar and was once elected Rector of the Retreat near Toscanella. But this lasted only for a short time, because, unable to resist his longing for solitude, and the care of his own soul, he prevailed upon his superiors to accept his resignation.

Scarcely was the good Father relieved of his burden than he devoted himself entirely to the pursuit of perfection. So impressed was this blessed man with the eternal truths, and above all with death, that the best method of representing him in a picture would have been to paint him in the act of meditating on death in front of a skull. His thoughts, his feelings. his whole life consisted in keeping before him the consideration of death.

and in preparing himself to die well. This perpetual thought bred in him a constant readiness, and kept him always fervent in the practice of virtue. His devotional exercises, his regular observance, were all directed to one end, namely, to serve as a preparation for death. His purity of conscience was pushed almost to the point of scrupulosity; his confessions were frequent and he would often repeat his general confession as though it were the last of his life.

So completely had he detached his heart from creatures that he seemed dead and buried to all that was not eternal. However greatly he might be beloved by those who knew him, he never became attached to them, nor would he put his trust in anyone. Except for reasons of charity or obedience, it was his habit to avoid the company of seculars, and to keep himself retired in solitude, on which account he preferred to live in the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro. His detachment from other things was no less remarkable. So far as he was concerned everything went well. Never did he go about looking for comforts, or curious or singular articles; his poverty was so extreme that he would not even take for his use the objects allowed by the holy Rule. His cell was among the poorest and least furnished; and when he resigned the office of Rector he had nothing to leave behind him but a small piece of wax taper which he used to guide him when he had occasion to leave his cell at night.

In the matter of purity he was extremely careful. We read in the memoirs that our Lord, in order to increase His servant's merit and re-

ward, permitted the enemy to molest him with terrible temptations to the end of his life. But the servant of God, assisted by divine grace, always fought with all his might, and overcame, to no small advantage of his soul. The necessity of such contests made him more fervent in the exercise of prayer, which in his case may be said to have been habitual; they rendered him quicker in avoiding occasions, and in fine, they kept him constant in the practice of mortification.

Where, however, he shone especially was in overcoming his self-love. It was a source of great edification to all to see Fr. Anthony, now advanced in years, always docile and pliable to obedience as though he had been a child; and that, not only towards his superiors, but even towards his inferiors and those who were very much younger than himself. It was sufficient for him to hear the word of obedience: at the least sign he was ready to run and execute an order without taking time to breathe.

It was noticed that to stay in the Retreat near Toscanella, especially in the summer, was very prejudicial to his health; because, among other inconveniences, he was often obliged to pass the night outside his cell in order to get air, and free himself from a troublesome cough which seemed to suffocate him. Nevertheless, because he knew it to be pleasing to his superiors, he remained there nearly all his life. During his term as Rector of this Retreat, he tried the plan of moving for the summer months to the house of S. Angelo near Vetralla for the benefit of his health. But after some days, as he was saying Mass one morn-

ing, he heard a voice say distinctly in his ear: "In this way, then, you leave your flock." This was enough. Immediately after Mass he ran to the superior and having asked his blessing set out for his own Retreat, where he found Fr. Bernadine of Jesus very ill and anxious to see him.

As we have already mentioned, Fr. Anthony was by nature very irritable and liable to be upset by the smallest thing. For this reason he was always on his guard and doing continual violence to himself. But strive as he would, sharp retorts occasionally escaped him. Then, in a few moments, he would enter into himself and realize his error; and the person addressed would behold Fr. Anthony before him on his knees begging pardon with tears in his eyes. Nor was he satisfied with this; he would often accuse himself of such faults in the refectory, and ask the superior to give him a penance, with such humility as to excite the religious to admiration.

And here we will close our brief review of Fr. Anthony's virtues, trusting that the reader has found matter therein to praise God in His servant and to feel himself spurred to imitate the holy man's example.



CHAPTER IV.

FATHER ANTHONY'S DEATH.

TOWARDS the middle of December. 1777, Fr. Anthony, who was still a member of the community of Toscanella, was attacked by a

catarrh more violent in character than that which usually troubled him. The servant of God was therefore obliged to take to his bed, and from the first day of his sickness began to say to the religious: "This sickness is the last: God calls me to Himself." And during the first days of the Christmas novena he repeated: "On Christmas day I shall not be alive: I shall not last till the festivals." But the religious were far from thinking his illness so dangerous as to threaten his life, much less that his death was so near as Fr. Anthony asserted.

Nevertheless, the Fr. Provincial, who happened to pass that way, noticing that Fr. Anthony was quiet and without his usual apprehensions, took quite another view; and this because he saw before him an instance of that which often happens in the case of saintly persons, namely, that God having tried His servants during life grants them tranquillity and consolation at the hour of death. Therefore he exhorted the sick man without ceremony to prepare himself for his last passage, and found him admirably disposed. The humble invalid asked whether he ought to repeat his general confession, adding however that, having made it several times, his conscience was at rest. The Provincial replied that there was no occasion to repeat it, and Fr. Anthony therefore contented himself with an ordinary confession.

On the nineteenth, still more assured of his approaching end, the invalid asked for the holy Viaticum which was given him; and it was an act of great tenderness and devotion for the community who were all present. The good Father, before

receiving the sacred species, wished publicly to protest that he was a great sinner, and to ask pardon of all those present and absent, and in particular of the superiors and benefactors of the Congregation, for all the scandal he had given them in the course of his life. The religious were moved to tears, while they wondered to behold how God rewarded His servant by sending this sweet and tranquil death to one who had hitherto been so timid at the thought of it.

So passed the days in uncertainty until the twenty-second, which was destined to be the last for Fr. Anthony. Of this he seemed to have a presentiment, because in the morning he begged that Extreme Unction might be administered; and although the religious could not yet believe that the end was near, it was thought well to satisfy him. He then requested that every now and then devout sentiments might be suggested to him, especially of confidence in God, that he might keep his heart united to our Lord for whom he ardently longed.

At the approach of evening he asked the superior to read the recommendation of a departing soul. For this purpose the community was assembled, and after the Papal blessing had been given, the recommendation was duly made. Truly edifying was the scene. Father Anthony was stretched out on his poor bed, weak indeed but completely conscious, and able with heart and voice to follow the prayers, holding in his hands a crucifix and imprinting fervent kisses on the wounds of Jesus. All at once he invoked the holy names of Jesus and Mary, and quietly gave

up his soul to his Creator, leaving all his brethren in great affliction, because they had lost in him so good an example, but at the same time greatly encouraged to serve God, Who, by means of His servant, had shown how faithful He is to keep His promise: *Timenti Dominum bene erit in extremis.* And now it only remains for us, to say: blessed we if, like this good Father, we hold fast to the advice of the Holy Spirit, to take death for our counsellor, and to make him the judge of all our actions. For then it will be true of us also that to die is not loss but gain.





Fr. Philip Hyacinth of the SS. Redeemer.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTHPLACE AND EARLY YEARS.

IN the number of the servants of God who, by their virtues, illustrated our Congregation in the period of its foundation, we must include Fr. Philip Hyacinth of the Most Holy Redeemer. He was born June the 8th, 1733, at Garessio in Piedmont, of honest and devout parents, Giacomo Porta and Angela Maria Zandone, who, though certainly not rich in the world's goods, were well endowed with Christian virtues, which earned for them the general esteem and good will of the district. Philip Hyacinth was their first born son; and by the manner of his bringing up, these good people demonstrated how well they were grounded in the principles of sound morality and Christian devotion. Scarcely had the child reached the age of three years when they confided him to the care of a good priest that he might be instructed, betimes, in the matters concerning faith and religion. Fortunate boy, who, before he could come to the knowledge of evil and feel

himself free to follow it, had already travelled a good distance along the road to salvation! Watched over in the house by careful parents and in the school by a devout teacher he soon became the consolation of the family, and a source of edification to all who knew him.

The good priest, seeing the excellent dispositions of his pupil, introduced him to the study of literature. At the age of thirteen, Philip had already finished the classics and at fourteen was ready to begin logic. But that which most consoled his parents and his master was his progress in piety and devotion. He was diligent in reciting his prayers according to the method prescribed by his tutor, regular in hearing and serving Mass and in his attendance at the church offices, and from the time of his admission to holy Communion approached the Sacraments every week. And on the day of his Communion he appeared even more modest and recollected than usual.

The composure of his bearing enchanted all who saw him; there was an indefinable air about the boy which was redolent of Divine grace. He was little given to pastimes, preferring rather to stay in the house, decorating little altars, drawing devout pictures or coloring sacred images.

But the influence of God's grace in Philip's soul was best seen in his irreproachable conduct and in the purity of his conscience. It was the constant opinion of his directors both in the world and in the cloister that this blessed soul always preserved his baptismal innocence; and during the time of his novitiate, to the great edification of his companions, he said with holy simplicity

that he did not understand the meaning of certain expressions used in devout books to denote the mortification of the passions. No one who ever knew him ever noticed in him an act, a look or a word which was not perfectly modest, or anything in the shape of malice or duplicity. His younger brother, who afterwards became one of our religious, under the name of Fr. John Baptist of St. Ignatius, related, among other things, that when they went to school together, Philip scrupled to do some translations for him, saying that he could not in conscience do anything to encourage his laziness.

These facts are certainly not extraordinary, but at the same time they cannot be classed as common in the case of a boy of thirteen. On the occasion of a jubilee published by Pope Benedict XIV, three fasts, among other good works, were prescribed. Philip observed them strictly, in order to gain the indulgence; and he found such consolation in keeping them that he made it a rule from that time to fast three times a week.



CHAPTER II.

GOD CALLS HIM TO THE CONGREGATION: HIS NOVITIATE.

WHEN Philip was fifteen years of age, God called his father to Himself; and humanly speaking, this seemed no small misfortune for the boy, because at that dangerous age his strongest

support was taken from him. But our Lord, who never abandons His servants, at the very time He withdrew this protection, provided Philip with a guardian in the person of the priest who had been his tutor. Not long afterwards the youth informed him that he felt himself called by God to the religious state. His choice was approved by the priest, and no difficulty was encountered on the part of his mother, who thanked God for her son's vocation.

It was now a question of choosing an Order in which to try his vocation, and it was generally thought that Philip would have joined the Capuchins to whom he was much attached and who had a convent in Garessio. But God had disposed otherwise. Philip had at that time heard of the foundation of the new Congregation of the Passion on Monte Argentaro; and from an inhabitant of Garessio, who had been in those parts for the good of his health, he learned many details of the life which was led there and of the good which was done. It happened that just then three young men were leaving Garessio for Monte Argentaro, and Philip decided that he would imitate their example. He therefore wrote to the superiors, to acquaint them of his intention and they deputed a canon who was a friend of theirs to examine the candidate.

It is related that as soon as Philip presented himself, the canon was greatly impressed by his modest and composed bearing and felt an interior certainty of the sincerity of the youth's intentions. He therefore wrote to Monte Argentaro a most favorable report which secured the postulant's

acceptance. Great was the grief of Philip's relations and friends when they heard that they were to lose him, but he took leave of them with dry eyes. He left home on the sixth of April and embarked at Savona for Monte Argentaro. The sea voyage appears to have been something of a penance, and the captain's behavior very rough. However, one day early in May Philip had the consolation of landing at Monte Argentaro where, on presenting himself at the Retreat, he was received by the religious with demonstrations of great joy.

Greater far, however, was the content of the postulant, who, as he set foot in that holy place, felt that he had found his heart's desire. Therefore his first thought was to thank God for the grace He had bestowed upon him, and to repeat with David: *Haec requies mea: hic habitabo*. In writing home he never tired of describing his happiness and urged his younger brother John Baptist to follow him as soon as possible.

Philip having passed through his preliminary trial, assumed the religious habit under the direction of Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus, who was local superior and Master of Novices. We read in the memoirs that this holy man recognized from the beginning the rare gem which Divine Providence had sent him that he might be polished and refined by the acquirement of the perfect virtues; nor was he deceived, because as soon as he put Philip to the proof he found him pliable and so disposed to respond to his efforts that among the novices of that year there was probably not one to equal him.

CHAPTER III.

STUDIES. ORDINATION. HE IS MADE LECTOR.

HAVING completed his year of novitiate, Confrater Philip, to his great joy, was admitted to profession. He was then sent to the Retreat of S. Eutizio to enter upon his course of philosophy under Fr. Joseph of St. Catherine, who, having occasion to mention him in a letter, wrote: "The life of Confrater Philip is a mirror in which are reflected all the virtues of a holy religious." This good student seemed indeed to possess the secret of combining assiduous attention to his books and studies with the most ardent pursuit of perfection. In the matter of observance, he was unexceptionable; fervent in recollection and in the exercise of the presence of God; while in humility, charity and obedience, he was such a model to his brethren that they blessed God that He had given him to the Congregation.

It even seemed that the Divine Goodness willed to demonstrate God's pleasure in this blessed soul by nothing less than a prodigy. Confrater Philip and his companions were standing one day by the well of the Retreat when Fr. Joseph, their lector, to try the obedience of the good student, told him to get into the bucket which hung over the water. In a moment Confrater Philip obeyed, and before the others could realize what he had done, he was being swiftly carried to the depths below. Running at once to the rope, they managed to stop the precipitous descent, and by using great exertions, to drag Confrater Philip to the

mouth of the well. His rescue was attributed to the intercession of S. Eutizio, whose body reposes in the church of the Retreat, and this supposition was confirmed by the revelation made to our holy Founder who was then staying at S. Angelo's near Vetralla. The Saint, at the precise moment of Confrater Philip's danger, called some of the religious and told them that S. Eutizio had worked a great miracle, by delivering Confrater Philip from death.

As soon as he had finished his course of philosophy, our fervent student was transferred to the Retreat of S. Angelo, to begin his theology under Fr. Marcus Aurelius, who may be said to have given the last touch to Confrater Philip's understanding of both human and divine knowledge. Such, at any rate, seems to have been the opinion of our holy Founder, under whose eyes this last course of study was accomplished; for the Saint not only gave his consent that the good student receive minor Orders, but suggested that he should proceed to the other Orders, and finally, in consideration of his extraordinary ripeness of judgment, he obtained from the Holy See a dispensation for his ordination to the priesthood a year in advance of the canonical age. It is recorded that he celebrated his first Mass at the Retreat of S. Angelo on September 29th, 1756.

We also read that the community had so great an esteem for his virtue and prudence that the superiors had no hesitation in appointing him spiritual Father to the Retreat, a choice more than justified by its results. To quote the written testimony of a member of the community: "Fr. Philip Hyacinth discharged the duties of this office

so admirably that we used to say that our Lord had sent us another St. Francis de Sales. His advice, his instructions, like those of the holy bishop, were full of gentleness and sweetness: solid and appropriate, as need demanded, and calculated to incite us to a great desire of our spiritual progress and the love of God.....” His dealings with secular penitents won him no less approbation; so that everyone thanked God that they had in that Retreat an angelic religious who was a living example of perfection.

It was doubtless for this reason that our holy Founder, when it became necessary to find a successor to Fr. Marcus Aurelius, on his appointment as Provincial of Campagna, chose Fr. Philip to fill the vacant chair of theology at S. Angelo’s. In this office, likewise, he more than fulfilled the expectations formed of him. Already possessing the esteem and love of his pupils, he left nothing undone for their advantage. After having commented on the text of the author they were studying, and clearing up their difficulties, he admitted to his cell those who required further explanations; and not content even with this, he would write out for them the opinions of other authors, especially those of St. Thomas Aquinas. Greater still, if possible, was his anxiety for their spiritual advancement. “Well might he be satisfied,” says the memoirs, “since that holy Retreat was like a heavenly garden, tenanted by angels rather than men; such was the fervor of these students and their director.” And that these effects were not merely transient, was evident in the after lives of those students, who when they came to fill impor-

tant offices in the Congregation, were conspicuous for the solicitude with which they discharged their duties.



CHAPTER IV.

HE IS SENT TO PREACH.

AFTER teaching for some years, Fr. Philip was given a change of work, for the superiors of the Congregation had now at their disposal other fit subjects to supply his place as Lector. He was now to be sent to preach missions, to which he devoted himself with great zeal for the rest of his life. The memoirs relate that his constitution was not particularly robust and that he often suffered from indisposition, principally in his head and stomach. Not on that account, however, did he exempt himself from observing the Rule in any particular, nor did he excuse himself from any service which obedience or charity might dictate. He found leisure to compose and write a good deal, and in a short time he had amassed a store of useful material to serve him in preaching of every kind.

The first to benefit by his labors were the people of the diocese of Frascati, near Rome, where Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer was his companion. Afterwards he preached in the diocese of Palestrina, and on his return to the Retreat of S. Angelo, he worked in the dioceses of Sutri, Viterbo, Urbania, Urbino and Todi; and

everywhere, whether he was engaged in missions or in spiritual exercises in public or in private, he was heard with immense pleasure. His doctrine was profound, his lucidity and his delivery left nothing to be desired; and in many cases the very sight of this zealous and single-hearted missionary sufficed to encourage sinners to confession and conversion.

We shall have occasion, later, to relate more in detail the sufferings of this blessed Father in the exercise of his ministry. For the present it is enough to say that everyone recognized the assistance of Divine grace in his laborious life, for humanly speaking, it was scarcely possible that a man of his delicate constitution could persevere in it. And yet Fr. Philip continued it during nine years, meeting trials and difficulties with an unconcern which excited general admiration; nor was he less indifferent as to the time and manner of his death, leaving all such considerations to the disposal of God's will.

And we speak in this way, especially because we read in the memoirs that Rosa Calabres, a pious young woman of Cervetri, mentioned in conversation with Fr. John Baptist, brother of our holy Founder, that Fr. Philip had for a long time kept her informed of his progress in spiritual matters, and that among other things he had said one day: "My daughter, for the future I shall not be able to give you any help, because God wills to take this useless servant from the world;" and then he added that if she wished to see him again she should go to the mission at Trevignano, because after that time they could not meet, he being

engaged to give a mission in the mountains where he would depart this life. The young woman was disinclined to believe, but Fr. Philip repeated his statement, assuring her that it would be so.

In fact, he himself was so positively persuaded of the truth of his prediction, that he began to make his preparation with extraordinary fervor. He seemed to be more recollected, more careful to increase his acts of devotion and mortification, and to give himself more than ever to prayer, in which, besides his customary hours in the day time, he would persevere from the end of Matins until the beginning of Prime. The fervent priest was not mistaken. Soon afterwards, at the request of Mgr. Struzzi, bishop of Todi, Fr. Philip was sent to give a mission at Montecchio, in that diocese, accompanied by Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer and Fr. Anthony of our Lady's Dolors. He accepted this duty, though he assured everyone that he would not return, and afterwards repeated his prediction several times to his companions during the journey.

And it began to be verified in part before they arrived at their destination. All three missionaries travelled on foot, when, in the neighborhood of Lugnano they missed their way and found themselves in the midst of thick forests and steep precipices without a guide or provisions of any kind. After much wandering and fatigue they found themselves once more on the right road to Montecchio, but in what a state may be imagined: and Fr. Philip, weaker in constitution than his companions, felt the consequence of their adventure most keenly. Nevertheless, the mission was

opened; but hardly had the fervent missionary finished the catechism than he was surprised by a violent fever, accompanied by spitting of blood; he was therefore obliged to take to his bed and put himself under the care of the doctors. Needless to say every assistance available in that lonely mountain district was at his service, to say nothing of the many prayers offered to God on his behalf by all who knew him, and by those who ardently desired his recovery for their own spiritual good. But his soul was ripe for heaven, and our Lord, satisfied with all the good missionary had wrought for His glory, willed now to reward him. All remedies were useless, and after two months of troublesome and painful illness, Fr. Philip passed from that sick bed to receive his crown.



CHAPTER V.

DETAILS OF HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH.

THE mission of Montecchio was continued and finished by Fr. Philip's companions, after which Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer, finding it impossible to take the sick man home, set out alone, leaving him in the care of Fr. Anthony. And it seemed as though our Lord permitted this in order to satisfy Fr. Philip's long cherished desire to die in an unknown place, and to have his purgatory in this world. Besides the pain of sickness, he found himself in a small hamlet on a steep mountain side where the air was cold and

where it was not possible to obtain for him the food and medicine proper for an invalid. The very house was no better than a hut, and good physicians were wanting, for which reason, perhaps, it was found that the drugs administered did more harm than good. In fact the state of things was so wretched that Fr. Vincent of St. Paul (afterwards Mgr. Strambi), who went to see him, exclaimed: "Here he is bound to die."

But Fr. Philip made use of all these unfavorable conditions to refine the purity of his spirit, and to exercise himself yet more in the practice of virtue. "During his illness," the curate attested, "I never heard from him a single word or sentence that was not full of piety and religion; nor did I ever hear him utter the smallest complaint in the midst of all his discomforts. He was always resigned to the Divine Will, depending on those who assisted him to the point of refusing to take anything unless assured that I had ordered it. When he spoke of spiritual matters and of the patience with which sufferings ought to be borne, he showed by the cheerfulness of his face and the smile on his lips, how sweet were the inward consolations vouchsafed to him."

This is confirmed by the testimony of his companion, Fr. Anthony, who assisted him until his death. "The good Father," said he, "in the midst of these discomforts and privations uttered only these words: 'God's will be done,' or, 'We are sons of the Passion; let us have patience.' "..... "Many times," added Fr. Anthony, "he obliged me to write letters of thanks to those who had sent him from afar some refreshment or medicine;

and he never tired of telling me to thank the curate, whose guests we were, for all he had done for him during his illness"—feelings which furnished an indubitable proof of uncommon virtue, and how he reflected in himself the example of Jesus Crucified. It seemed, indeed, that he fortified his spirit with the remembrance and vision of that great Exemplar; for during the whole of his illness he desired to be roused every day that his companions might read to him a meditation on the Passion: so also at the appointed hours he wished the divine Office to be recited in an intelligible voice; and because Fr. Anthony made some difficulty on account of the danger of contagion, Fr. Philip assured him that our Lady had told him to fear nothing, because no harm would ensue.

With these good dispositions Fr. Philip continued to prepare himself for the last passage, the time for which unfortunately was fast approaching, as he himself was persuaded; for he invariably answered enquiries as to his state by saying: "Ah! I must leave my bones here at Montecchio." And once when his companion asked him if he made this sacrifice willingly, he replied: "Most willingly, if it be God's will. Oh, how content I am always to do the most holy will of God!—*Deus meus et omnia.*" On the vigil of All Saints, when Fr. Anthony reminded him that on the morrow a great festival would be kept in Paradise, the servant of God, showing much delight, asked what festival it would be: and having understood that it was the Feast of All Saints, and being asked if he would wish to go and enjoy it, he answered: "May it be God's will!"

In the meantime, the curate, seeing that the sick man's weakness continually increased, no longer delayed to warn him that death was near, and that God not merely willed him to go to Paradise, but to go quickly. At this news Fr. Philip displayed the utmost joy and gladness, and when his companion added that it would be well if he received Holy Communion by way of Viaticum, "Willingly," replied Fr. Philip, "willingly. Ah, my Jesus, this is what I desire." He then went to Confession for the last time, asking pardon of his companion, of his superiors, and of all his brethren in the Congregation. Then, when he was exhorted to prepare himself for Holy Communion, by thinking only of Jesus and Mary, he was able, with all confidence, to answer that his thoughts were always with them. With these sentiments of devotion and love he received his Lord in the Holy Sacrament, and then Extreme Unction, as well as the usual blessings; finally, as he grew much weaker, the recommendation of a departing soul was read. Scarcely fifteen minutes afterwards, he entered upon his last agony, and, in the midst of the deepest peace, gave up his soul to God, as though he were falling asleep, flying up to heaven in company with the saints, there to celebrate their glorious festival, as he desired and as we have reason to believe, after a life of thirty-nine years, of which he had passed twenty-two in the Congregation in the constant exercise of every virtue.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS PIETY AND RELIGION.

WE have noticed from the beginning of this sketch how Fr. Philip, as a boy and youth in the world, was regarded as already great in virtue, so that everyone admired the precocious steadiness and gravity of his habits, his fervent devotion for holy things, and his delicacy of conscience in observing the Divine law. Whence it could be justly said that when he entered the Congregation he was already half a religious and that his directors and superiors had only to give the final touch in order to perfect the rare qualities which were his by nature and by grace. When he left the world in body he had already quitted it in spirit, and his heart was therefore soon united to God and full of God, because it was empty of all earthly affection and of human desires of any kind.

Among the eye witnesses who left their testimony on record was one who wrote: "When one observed Fr. Philip closely, one saw in him a religious who cared naught for the world, and was almost stupid with regard to worldly concerns; ever recollected in himself, and longing after God and the things of heaven as the wounded stag thirsts for the brook; so that he could say with the Apostle: *Mihi vivere Christus est....et vita mea abscondita est cum Christo, in Deo.* From this spirit proceeded his angelic modesty, his admirable composure, and that web of all the religious virtues which distinguished him in the eyes of everyone and rendered him, in every place, the

good odor of Jesus Christ. On the other hand his countenance, almost always sorrowful, his eyes almost continually weeping, his timid and reserved bearing proclaimed him a religious full of the thought of God, and of a holy filial fear, which set him continually on his guard lest he should offend the Divine Majesty (and bred in him a ceaseless desire to bind and unite himself to it more and more.)”

As to the degree of prayer reached by Fr. Philip few particulars have been preserved; but from what has been said we know that he entered the Congregation innocent and with a heart free from those impediments which like clouds intervene between us and any intimate communion with God. Besides, he gave the most unequivocal signs of being one of those of whom the Apostle speaks, who lives by faith and desires nothing but God. All the religious who were his companions testified that they saw him ever recollected and modest, as one who is always in the presence of God. Whosoever approached him while he was praying could attest that he had often seen him break into tender weeping and heard him give forth deep sighs. If he heard anyone speak of holy things, or if anyone gave him a devout picture, his face at once betrayed the impetuosity of his interior affection and he remained as though rapt in God.

And then, when he spoke, it was a marvel for those who listened; his words and phrases were as fiery darts which penetrated and wounded the hardest hearts; it was as though he could not speak well unless he employed his tongue in

praising God and in proclaiming His right to be loved and served by all. For all these reasons he was considered as one of the wisest, most enlightened and most capable of directors.

His conduct, moreover, was always in harmony with his speech. His piety, devotion and fervor were always so extraordinary that to speak with him once was sufficient to compel admiration. When in choir, he looked like an angel; such was his modesty and composure there, that he was never known to raise his eyes. When he celebrated Mass no one could behold him without being incited to devotion and recollection, because he displayed the fervor of a seraphim and was often dissolved in tears. On all occasions his devotion enchanted the beholder, and some were known to follow him in secret, that their fervor might increase thereby.

His holy indifference towards all things was a never ending lesson, so likewise was that serenity and simplicity of spirit which made him content with everything, ever resigned, cheerful with all, meek and equable, although he had sometimes occasion to be angry. His ordinary expression when trouble of any sort had to be faced was: "Let us pray, and leave action to God who orders all things for our good." Hence it was that as the memoirs say, Fr. Philip was a magnet which attracted everyone.



CHAPTER VII.

HIS OBSERVANCE OF THE VOWS.

A religious like Fr. Philip, given to prayer and converse with God could scarcely fail to be very diligent in fulfilling those obligations towards the Divine Majesty which he had contracted by means of his vows. His observance of poverty was so jealous that he would never take advantage of those small conveniences which, without being contrary to the spirit of the vow, render its effects less severe. This was one of the subjects of examination during his monthly retreat. "Not to seek for comfort or refreshment by my own will, but to take it through obedience or by way of alms." Out of his love of poverty he would write his sermons on fly-leaves of letters. He was most careful not to keep anything superfluous in his cell, not even books, except those which were absolutely necessary. He once returned to a nun a small bag which she had sent him to hold a relic, because there was a little gold embroidery on it. When he was lector, in order to save the oil, he would recite his office standing by the lamp before the Blessed Sacrament. And so, during his last illness, although he was in the house of others, he would not allow the lamp to burn in his chamber at night, lest he should offend against poverty. In fine, he never took thought about food and clothes, not even on his journeys. All this he left to the care of his superiors and companions, as though he were a child, showing himself always cheerful and content.

What shall we say of his purity? It was the conviction of all who knew him and had the direction of his conscience, that Fr. Philip was one of those fortunate souls whom God has endowed from their birth with this beautiful gift. The natural beauty of his countenance attracted all who beheld it; but this notwithstanding, such was his composure and modesty that he everywhere inspired respect. This was also a gift of God, as he himself acknowledged when he reminded his brother, Fr. John Baptist, that they both had great reason to thank God, because whilst still in the world, although they had been in the flames, they had been preserved, like the three children in the furnace of Babylon.

Father Fulgentius, his Novice-master, did not hesitate to assert that Fr. Philip had preserved his baptismal innocence and used to speak of him as another St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Fr. Marcus Aurelius, his lector, attested the same. And in truth the modesty of his appearance and bearing would not but lead everyone to the same conclusion. It was very difficult to discover the color of his eyes, because he kept them always fixed on the ground. His countenance presented a combination of seriousness and affability, which while it inspired confidence, suggested respect. His lips never uttered a word that was not absolutely proper; and if any doubtful word was uttered in his presence he showed the affliction of his soul in the modest blush which suffused his countenance.

When, in the course of his ministry, he was obliged to speak with women, he did so with his

usual gentleness, tempered with a surprising gravity and modesty. On one occasion, when called to visit a sick woman, he noticed that his companion withdrew and closed the door after him, but Fr. Philip immediately ran to open it, nor would he allow it to be otherwise. Another time he heard the confession of a nun with whom he had often spoken: but he only knew her by voice, for he had never looked her in the face. His aversion to curiosity was as extraordinary as it was admirable. He kept himself always retired in his cell, except when he had to leave it for some community duty, or at the call of obedience or charity. Wherever he was, either at home or abroad, he never manifested even the most innocent desire to behold vanities or curiosities. In a word his heart was entirely given to God, to whom he had consecrated himself.

Passing now to speak of his obedience, we may note that he seemed to have imbibed a great esteem for it with his mother's milk. It was enough for him to know the wishes of his parents or tutors; they might be certain that he would carry them out exactly. As a religious, he won the hearts of all, precisely because he respected everyone, and submitted himself to them with wonderful simplicity and docility.

To understand the degree of obedience at which he had arrived, we may mention how, during his novitiate, because he had not understood the order of his master, who had told him to go to a certain place, he made his way through a thorny thicket that he might get there more quickly, lacerating his feet as he did so. When he was

lector in theology, it happened that he assembled his class on the morning of one of those days known amongst us as feasts of Rule, according to custom. However, the local superior, perhaps, owing to some mistake, ordered him to omit the class as out of place on such a day. Fr. Philip, who might have made some remonstrance to the higher superiors, did nothing of the kind; he simply dismissed his class and never referred to the matter. Another time, after having given the spiritual exercises in a monastery, he set out for home immediately, notwithstanding very heavy rain, with the result that when he arrived home he was drenched. His motive for hurry being that a certain time had been appointed for his return by his superior. This superior, distressed to see Father Philip in such a plight, explained that it had not been his intention to expose him to such inconvenience. It is related that he had a great dislike to say Mass in the Church when there were people present, but his confessor, in order to cure him of this weakness, bade him celebrate when it was crowded; and the humble priest obeyed like a child. In a word, the superior, whoever he might be, had only to command, and the servant of God was prompt and blind in his obedience. When Fr. Marcus Aurelius was Provincial, he wished to make Fr. Philip superior of the Retreat of Paliano. The holy religious, actuated by profound humility, felt himself obliged to refuse. His wish was respected, but if he had been told to resign himself to the Provincial's desire, he would certainly have obeyed.

This wonderful docility was even more remarkable in his last illness. As we have seen, he was shut up in the house of the parish priest of Montecchio, and was obedient in all things to the slightest wish of that good priest. In the beginning of his illness, a doctor, whose understanding of the case was probably imperfect, prescribed Epsom salts. The servant of God, although he foresaw the mischief which would result, took them at once, and as a consequence began to spit blood more copiously than before. Another doctor ordered him alum and water, which proved not only disagreeable to the palate but most unfortunate in its effect. The sick man nevertheless, persevered in taking the mixture until the pain became insupportable.

It now remains for us to speak of his diligence in observing our fourth vow—to promote in the hearts of the faithful devotion to the Passion of Christ. Few words will suffice, because what has been previously said abundantly demonstrates that Fr. Philip had the image of Jesus Christ Crucified ever before his eyes, anxious to reproduce it in himself and to imprint it on the minds of others. For his own part, we read that it was his daily custom to meditate upon some mystery of the Passion. Every night, too, he made the stations of the Cross with such extraordinary devotion that he seemed to bewail with tears the sufferings of his beloved Redeemer. If he suspected that any account was made of him he used to say: “I neither esteem nor desire anything but Jesus and Him Crucified for love of me.” In times of discomfort, and especially when no

remedy was at hand, he would say: "Patience; we are sons of the Passion; Jesus Christ was poor and died on the Cross;" or, "This is nothing in comparison with that which Jesus Christ has suffered for us." When he talked with others, and during his missionary labors, his fervor, in endeavoring to stir up his neighbor to be devout to the Passion, was something remarkable. His words produced wonderful effects, not merely by the feeling he threw into them, but because he confirmed them by the example of his holy life.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOR.

ONE of the most beautiful qualities with which Fr. Philip was endowed by nature, was his gentle, meek and affable disposition, by means of which he unconsciously attracted everyone as with a magnet. Neither as a young man in the world nor as a religious did he ever have the smallest disagreement with anyone. In his school days he would often get the better of an argument, but he always withdrew in time to avoid the discomfiture of his opponent. Then, as lector in theology, he knew how to make allowance for the weakness of his pupils. He used every means in his power to comfort them in their troubles, to clear up their doubts and help them in their studies. It is almost superfluous to say that with such a method he won their esteem and affection.

Among the maxims which guided his conduct and to which he had bound himself, was, never voluntarily to be the cause of trouble to anyone. It is related that having once had occasion to correct a religious for some small fault, he was afraid afterwards lest he might have given him bad example, or have caused him displeasure. He lost no time in going to beg his pardon with every sign of confusion. During his journeys he would never make use of a carriage; he insisted that his companions should make use of it, while he himself went on foot. Nor would he ever permit any lay-brother who might be with him to carry his bag or his mantle. In times of sickness, he would hide his indisposition, lest he should be a source of trouble to his superiors and companions: and so he suffered in silence.

But Fr. Philip was not merely content to be no burden to others. The charity which animated him made him ceaselessly anxious to do good to his neighbor. His parents had accustomed him when a child to give alms with his own hand, and this spirit of charity early awakened, increased with his growth. As a religious, also, it was his delight to bestow alms and he would himself go to the door of the Retreat to take part in the distribution. When he happened to be supplying the place of the superior, he would also send what was needful to the houses of those who were in want, and would often interest himself with the superiors of the Congregation in favor of special cases where assistance was required.

His charity was even more conspicuous when

the spiritual benefit of his neighbor was in question. We read in the memoirs that it would be impossible to describe his ardor for the sanctification of the good and for the conversion of sinners. In this matter he cared nothing for his own convenience, forgot his need of rest, and ignored his delicate health. Whosoever desired his services found him always ready with inexhaustible gentleness and close attention, as though he had no other call upon him.

When he went out on the mission he was totally forgetful of himself in his anxiety for the benefit of others. Writing to a religious some account of his labors at Urbino he said: "Early in the morning I gave the instruction on the decalogue. Towards mid-day, for eight days I discoursed to about three hundred clergy, secular and regular. In the evening the same poor Fr. Philip gave an instruction on confession. I tell your Reverence this because I know that it will give you pleasure, and also that you may thank our Lord, and beg Him to continue His assistance during our future labors." He refers here to other missions in the same diocese and to spiritual exercises to two communities of fifty and sixty nuns. "During all this time," he also wrote to the same religious, "from half an hour before dawn until night I am either preaching or hearing confessions with intervals only for dinner and the divine office." He followed a similar system in all the ministries to which he was called, dedicating himself without stint of weariness and trouble to the great work of saving souls.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS MORTIFICATION AND HUMILITY.

FROM the days of his childhood Fr. Philip was convinced of the necessity of mortification. In his youth he practised self-denial and was careful in everything to overcome his natural inclinations. And later, when he was called to religion, he chose the Order which was said to be the most austere, without considering his natural weakness of constitution. For the twenty-two years of his religious life he was always constant in a rigorous observance of the Rule, although he might, with very good reason, have asked for dispensations.

Among his letters we find one to a religious who was anxious for news of his health, in which he writes: "I am, as usual, like a cracked bell, neither very ill nor very well; weakness of stomach and, this year, pains in the head: but it is all bearable. And this is one of the greatest graces which our Lord has granted me, that although people who do not know me are apt, at first sight, to think I am ill, yet, nevertheless, I have always been able to observe our common life."

But Fr. Philip was far from contenting himself with the austerities and penances prescribed by the Rule. Among the other resolutions which he was accustomed to renew on the day of his monthly retreat was this: "To destroy in myself all self-love, and not to seek for myself any sort of comfort." In those days the food provided

for the religious was quite limited. It was his habit never to take anything in the morning until dinner-time even when he was on the mission, where, as his companions attested, he had to be forced to eat, because, if left to himself, this would have been the very last thing he would have remembered. He was also accustomed to the use of hair-shirts and to wear little chains, to say nothing of his frequent disciplines. In short, the life of Fr. Philip was one continual mortification, a real life of sacrifice, which he offered to the Divine Majesty, as a tribute of his service, and as a token of love and gratitude to the Saviour who had suffered so much for him. Beautiful was his reply to a friend who had begged him to take more care of himself: "Let us fix our attention on the end of our vocation, and be careful to fulfil its obligations exactly, and then let God do with us as He pleases. Perish this bodily life of a moment, provided it is offered as a sacrifice to the Divine Will." And we have seen how he himself died as a victim and holocaust in honor of his God.

Fr. Philip had founded the edifice of his spiritual life upon humility. As the memoirs tell us, he thought less of himself than we can imagine. God had dealt out to him with unsparing hand a rich store of gifts in the order of nature as well as in the order of grace. But he returned them all again to God who was the source and fount of them all, and reserved for himself only his own nothingness, having always on his lips that he wished "to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified." Whence it was that

although his knowledge was recognized by all to be beyond the average, he never boasted of it, but used to say that he would willingly begin his studies over again, had he been a younger man, because he seemed to himself so backward.

And these were not mere words. Everyone present at his theological lectures observed that he did not seem like a master among his pupils: he did not hesitate to manifest his doubts to the students and to weigh their opinions. And because a religious who knew him particularly well asked him why he hid his talents, Fr. Philip sighing deeply, as though touched to the quick, replied with a blush: "And are you also deceived in me? I care to know nothing but my Crucified Lord."

Nor was he content with having simply a poor opinion of himself. He went further, and imagined himself full of defects, which were a continual source of humiliation and confusion to him. On this account he never would presume to examine, judge or enquire into anyone else's conduct. Minding always his own affairs, he always thought and spoke well of others, treating all with respect and politeness, even persons of the lowest class. His gifts as a missionary were remarkable, and bore abundant fruit. Nevertheless, every time he left the Retreat to preach, he seemed full of fear and apprehension; and he would recommend himself to the prayers of others lest, as he said, in these spiritual undertakings he should do more harm than good.

An effect of the same conviction that he was full of vices, was seen in his unwillingness

to be placed over others. For some time he had discharged the office of Vicar in the Retreat of S. Angelo. The servant of God could never accuse himself to perform his duties as temporary superior without blushing; and if he had occasion to address the community or even to bless the table in the refectory, his voice trembled with nervousness. His dislike to say Mass in presence of seculars has been already mentioned. He would grow pale, tremble and perspire. One day a superior obliged him to tell the reason; and Fr. Philip ingenuously confessed that all this happened because he fancied that every one present might reprove him for his unworthiness in celebrating that most holy sacrifice.

A final proof of Fr. Philip's humility was discovered after his death. Among his papers was found one in which he had written out those favors which he asked of our Lord. The first was that he might die as a simple religious; the second that he might die in a place where he was quite unknown; and the third was that he might suffer his purgatory in this world. And it seemed that God granted his petition in all respects; for Fr. Philip's life was one of continual suffering; he died in a little mountain hamlet where no one knew him; and he was never superior, although he possessed all the necessary qualities. It may be that to free him from the burden he dreaded, and which he would probably have had to bear had he lived, God called Fr. Philip to Himself in the flower of his age.

CHAPTER X.

EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCES AFTER
FATHER PHILIP'S DEATH.

THE virtues of Fr. Philip, as we have seen, were such as to warrant the belief that he was a soul far advanced in perfection and very dear to God: but the memoirs furnish us with other facts which demonstrates the same in a manner even more reliable, inasmuch as they happened after his death.

As soon as it was known in Montecchio that he had passed to another world, there was universal grief. Everyone proclaimed him a Saint and envied his happy lot. The next day all the people assembled to take part in the funeral procession, and such was the enthusiasm of those who flocked to kiss the hands and feet of the holy religious, and obtain, if possible, some remembrance of him that at last men had to be employed to keep guard. Notwithstanding this precaution, part of his habit was cut away, as well as his cap and nearly all his hair, while the house in which he had breathed his last was taken by assault and everything he had used during his illness was parceled out for distribution. The devotion of the people did not stop here. Fearing that our religious would come to take away the body, they would not even wait twenty-four hours for the burial. A simple coffin of wood was prepared with a parchment bearing the Father's name. In this the remains were placed as soon as possible, and buried under the altar of Our Lady's

Assumption in the parish church. More than once did our religious try to obtain possession of the body, but notwithstanding the willingness of the bishop, Mgr. Struzzieri, nothing could be done; for the people threatened to rise. Therefore the matter was dropped, and Fr. Philip's body remains at Montecchio to this day.

While the body of the servant of God remained exposed in the church, one Guiseppe Cleri, following the example of others who wished to obtain some memento of the missionary, went so far as to lay hands on the badge of the Passion which he wore on his breast. As he did so, he saw the arm of the deceased lift itself and cover the badge with its hand to prevent the theft. The surprise and fear of the irreverent peasant may be more easily imagined than described.

Many were the cures obtained by sick people who recommended themselves to the intercession of Fr. Philip; and the Vicar General of the diocese of Todi, Don Clementi Martini, made a long and formal collection of these cases. It is sufficient to say that the Archpriest of Montecchio used to remark: "When we want graces we have recourse to Fr. Philip: here we rule him with a rod." The reader would doubtless welcome some account of these favors, but this would require greater space than we have at command. We can, therefore, only refer to some of them which seemed to us specially worthy of mention.

A native of Todi, who happened to be in Montecchio when Fr. Philip died, was taken with a severe colic. Having applied the girdle worn by the holy man to the part affected, he was im-

mediately freed from all pain. A woman of Montecchio was at the point of death when a piece of Fr. Philip's habit was laid upon her. She revived and next day left her bed. A certain Gregorio Grandi, of the same place, was much troubled by pains in the stomach and convulsions. Having recommended himself to the servant of God he instantly recovered. Another native of Montecchio, Alessio Paolucci, having lost his reason, some charitable person placed upon the poor man's head a portion of Fr. Philip's habit, praying the while, and Alessio was completely cured.

A nun of Lugnano deposed that being very ill, she saw Fr. Philip come to her bedside holding a cross in his left hand while he kept the fingers of his right hand open. The vision quickly disappeared, nor could its meaning be gathered before the fifth day when, the sick nun having persevered in recommending herself to the intercession of Fr. Philip, her ailment left her and the next day she left her bed perfectly cured.

A certain Maddelena Frollini, also of Lugnano, swallowed a few threads of Fr. Philip's habit and was immediately cured of a throat trouble which had prevented her from swallowing anything for fifteen days. Elisabetta Bellucci was at death's door with a dangerous fever. While the priest was assisting her, she was given some threads of Fr. Philip's habit to swallow. Next day she was quite cured.

In the neighborhood of Cesi, Canon Saverio Martini was attacked by some internal illness. He could retain no food and became so weak that he could scarcely walk. A nun sent him a piece

of Fr. Philip's habit, telling him to carry it about with him and recommend himself to the intercession of the servant of God. The priest did so, and on the following day said Mass for Fr. Philip's soul. From that moment the illness left him; he was able to eat, and regained his strength.

Finally, let us add that Fr. Philip Hyacinth was so beloved by our holy Founder that when he died it was judged expedient to keep the news from the Saint, so as to spare him a great grief. When at length it was broken to him he became very sad and continued for some time to bewail a loss which, as he said, was a very serious one for the Congregation. Our Lord, it would seem, willed to compensate him for this grief, because, not long afterwards, speaking with Fr. John Baptist, brother of the deceased, he assured him that Fr. Philip had remained only a very short time in purgatory, and was already in paradise; adding that he knew it for certain, because he had seen him.





Father Bernardine of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

HIS LIFE IN THE WORLD.

ONE of the first disciples who had the happiness of being received into the Congregation by our holy Founder himself was Fr. Bernardine of Jesus, a constant and faithful follower of the Saint in his life of mortification and penance. He was born at Bieda, in the province and diocese of Viterbo, on June 21st, 1711. His father was Count Vircenzo Anguillara, and his mother Maria Francesca Luccarelli-Nicolai, both very devout people. Bernardine, who was the second of their two sons, seemed to have imbibed with his mother's milk the solid principles of piety and virtue. He very soon gave unmistakable signs of the kind of life which he would chose. He manifested a strong inclination for devotion and retirement, detachment from worldly things and extraordinary care to provide for the wants of the poor.

As soon as he was old enough he was put to his studies, in the course of which his tutors had the satisfaction of seeing the gradual unfolding of his fine dispositions, especially of obedience, modesty and devotion, which eventually led to the development of the germs placed by Divine Providence in that tender heart into a vocation to the religious state. On the completion of his course of literature, Bernardine opened his mind to his father and mother, telling them that he felt a call to leave the world and to enter the Order of Discalced Carmelites.

An announcement of this kind would have occasioned regret in any other parents; but young Bernardine's father and mother found in it a source of consolation. And they would have found no difficulty in giving their consent, had not a grave misfortune suddenly plunged them into grief while at the same time it raised a serious obstacle in the way to the fulfilment of Bernardine's intentions. This was the premature death—in Rome—of his elder brother, Robert, at the age of thirty years. In the face of this event, the parents persuaded Bernardine, now their only son, to stay at home. They were also anxious that their family should not become extinct, now that Robert no longer remained to fulfil the hopes they had justly founded on him. For this reason they secured a suitable alliance for Bernardine, who, at the age of twenty-one, espoused a devout young lady, a member of the Barbazzi family, of Toscanella. The good qualities of Bernardine's bride were much admired by our holy Founder when he came to Bieda to give a mission; and he

was so edified by her conversation that he afterwards wrote to the Archpriest for further information about her, which is still preserved among the memoirs of Fr. Bernardine.

Encouraged by the example of his good and holy partner in life, Bernardine made constant progress in the exercise of Christian virtue, verifying in this the saying of the Holy Spirit: "*Mulieris bonæ, beatus vir.*" Afterwards, when he had become a religious, he used to say: "Happy had it been for me had I known how to imitate the holy example of the companion whom our Lord had given me." We know that the two young people rivalled each other in the service of God and in the practise of virtue. Besides frequenting the Sacraments, they passed much time in prayer, and not content with doing so during the day, they took it in turns to rise during the night for an hour's meditation. One of their principal occupations in the daytime was the service of the poor, of whom they were true benefactors. Among other recipients of their bounty, was a certain Simon, a poor man afflicted with a noisome gangrene who was often visited by Bernardine. Upon the occasion of one of these visits the future Passionist, in a moment of fervor, thought to relieve the unfortunate sufferer by kissing his wound three times. This inspired and unexpected act of charity so moved the poor man that whenever he remembered it he could not restrain his tears.

Perhaps no better instance could be adduced of Bernardine's advance along the road which led to the summit of perfection, whither he was being guided by Divine Providence. So long as

his father lived, he was free from domestic affairs and had leisure to give himself entirely to the practice of the devout life, which he did so effectually as to seem a religious rather than a person living in the world. The time which remained over from his exercises of piety and charity he constantly spent in the solitude of his own room, where he devoted himself to the study of theology and the Fathers, as well as Church history, thus preparing himself, without knowing it, for the ecclesiastical state.

During his ten years of married life he had two sons, of whom one died very young, while James, the other, happily survived. We can imagine the education which a father such as Bernardine would be likely to give his child, and sort of example with which he would illustrate the holy precepts which he strove to instil into the young mind. In later years, at any rate, the results of his efforts were seen in the conduct of James, who maintained in his life the spotless credit of his family.



CHAPTER II.

HIS VOCATION TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATE AND THEN TO RELIGION.

IN the course of the year 1742, our Lord, who desired Bernardine for His own service, began to loosen the bonds which kept him in the world. During the month of August, his pious spouse

passed to a better life. Her death was very edifying and she was sincerely mourned by all who knew her. Her husband's grief was deep indeed; but God was ready to compensate him with a wonderful consolation. One night, as he watched, his wife appeared to him, and assured him that she was already enjoying the glories of paradise, adding that it was God's will that he should become a priest, so that he might live entirely consecrated to the divine service. Great was Bernadine's comfort at these words which brought to his eyes a flood of tears.

It would seem, indeed, that during her life, Bernardine's companion was not altogether without light from God on this subject. She had donated to the church a rich garment which was made into a handsome chasuble. This she showed to her husband, remarking, as she did so: "With this chasuble I hope you will make a fine figure." And the prediction was fulfilled; for Bernardine celebrated his first Mass in this very vestment.

Having received this admonition from beyond the tomb, and seeing in it the expression of God's will, Bernardine made up his mind at once, and prepared himself for the necessary steps to carry it into effect, to the great satisfaction of his father. The bishop of Viterbo gave his approval and active support; and when, after the lapse of a year, the candidate presented himself for examination, his capacity was found to be more than sufficient. The bishop then conferred on Bernadine the first of the sacred Orders, and finally, in December, 1743, promoted him to the priesthood, at the age of thirty-two years and six months.

The new priest had the consolation of saying his first Mass on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, and was served at the altar by his own little son. Although he was without a benefice, he spontaneously began to exercise all the duties of his state. He frequented the choir with great regularity, and made a point of being present at every function. After being approved for confessions, he exercised himself in that ministry with extraordinary fervor, delighting to assist the parish priest in the work of saving souls. In a word, such was his joy and promptitude in the discharge of his sacred duties, that all regarded him as a true angel of God.

But the work of grace in his soul was not yet at an end. Not long after his ordination God took Bernadine's father to Himself, and the young priest suddenly found himself called upon to take the management of the family affairs. Notwithstanding his detachment from the things of the world, he did not shrink from the duty which had then unexpectedly devolved upon him; but animated always by a pure intention, he submitted himself to the dispositions of Divine Providence. The first thing he did was to get rid of almost all the servants and the horses and carriage and some other things not strictly necessary, with the object of diminishing his responsibilities and also that there might be more for the church and the poor. He was likewise careful not to allow his new duties to interfere with those proper to the ecclesiastical state; and to this end he was provided by our Lord with a strong support in the person of our holy Founder, who resided in the

neighboring Retreat of S. Angelo; and under such an able director, what might not be expected?

The effect was soon forthcoming. Fr. Bernardine, the better to assure himself that he was following God's will, asked permission to visit the Retreat, for the purpose of making a course of spiritual exercises. Here, with the benefit of silence, prayer, and the edifying example of that flourishing community, he felt himself so affected that he made up his mind to abandon the world and to enroll himself among the members of our Congregation. We give the words with which he expressed his thoughts towards the close of the exercises: "Do you know how it is? I wish to settle my son in life, and then to enter religion; all the more because I find that the Lenten diet which heretofore has always done me harm, has, on the contrary, done me much good during these few days." This speech was regarded by the religious in the light of a joke, when they considered his rather advanced age, and his delicate constitution. Our holy Founder himself, for these very reasons, refused his first application; but the priest's persistence and his manifestation of the impulses at work within him, the Saint ultimately saw the finger of God, and decided to accept him.

Contented beyond words at this new grace, Fr. Bernardine at once returned home, and employed himself in making provision for his son, the only responsibility which lay between him and the realisation of his cherished design. He had very soon the satisfaction of providing him with a suitable bride; after which, having put his

affairs in order, and leaving his son all kinds of useful remembrances, he set out, in April, 1751, for Monte Argentaro, where, after the usual probation, he received the habit of the Congregation, to the great joy of his heart, in the fortieth year of his age.



CHAPTER III.

AFTER PROFESSION, GOES TO S. MARIA DEL CERRO:
HIS SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

WITH the habit of the Passion, it seemed that Fr. Bernardine had assumed the rainment of virtue proper to his new state. Already inclined by nature to simplicity and humility, he soon became a mirror in which his fellow-novices beheld every perfection characteristic of the true religious. He was set to sweep the church, a task he gladly accepted, although he would often ask his companions to show him how to do it. "See," he would say, with a smile, "in forty years I have not yet learned how to sweep. How backward I am!" It is related that if, in the course of conversation, he mentioned the name of his son, he would as soon as possible accuse himself of this fault in the refectory; and because his novice-master, Fr. Fulgentius, made this an occasion to mortify him, Fr. Bernardine was all the better pleased.

With this holy fervor he passed the whole of his novitiate, at the close of which he was unani-

mously admitted to profession. Almost immediately afterwards, he received orders to go to the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro, near Toscanella, where he remained for the rest of his life, finding the place thoroughly congenial to his spirit of prayer and recollection. Here he acted as confessor, to the great profit of souls, and was afterwards elected Rector, winning general admiration by his excellent qualities.

His love for retirement became more remarkable than ever. His time was passed in the presence of God; and even when he was superior, although he looked well after the temporalities of the Retreat, as in duty bound, he was no less solicitous in spiritual matters both as regarded himself and his subjects. Not content with the time allotted by the Rule to mental prayer, he spent every available hour in meditation. His mornings, almost wholly given to this exercise, were passed in a small choir annexed to the church, where he would await in prayer the hour for the last Mass, which he was accustomed to celebrate himself.

That he received special favors from God in meditation cannot be doubted; and although he was careful to hide the fact, we learn that he once confided to his director that he had received the gift of prayer and deep recollection to such a degree that, on a certain occasion, he was rapt in ecstasy. Whenever he spoke, he immediately manifested the feelings of his heart, and showed how ardent was the fire of his love. He seemed, say the witnesses, unable to discourse on any other subject than God, or on matters which

served to kindle the divine love in his breast. At recreation time he always turned the conversation on spiritual subjects; and when idle topics were introduced, he would interrupt with holy simplicity, saying: "If you will not talk of God, I shall go away."

His manner of speaking was too graceful to annoy anyone; on the contrary his listeners were greatly edified and consoled. Our holy Founder himself, who passed the winter whenever he could at the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro, took great pleasure in hearing Fr. Bernardine discourse of God; and the holy character of their conversation would so edify and astonish the other religious that they often left the recreation room as though they were quitting a school of prayer.



CHAPTER IV.

OTHER VIRTUES AND GOOD WORKS.

IT is hardly necessary to say that Fr. Bernardine jealously guarded the spiritual gifts wherewith he had been so generously endowed by God. He avoided all distractions and dissipations, was careful not to mix himself up in business which did not concern him, and sedulously kept aloof from everything which might possibly prove a source of disquietude. He never left the Retreat except when called by necessity or required by obedience; and when he went out he returned as

quickly as duty permitted to his beloved solitude.

It is related that once when some important reason called him to see his son, who lived at Canepina, he left the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro very early on a June morning and went on foot to Viterbo, a distance of twelve miles. Here he celebrated Mass and after taking some slight refreshment at the house of a relative, continued his journey immediately, much to the astonishment of his hostess, notwithstanding his advancing years and delicate constitution. Still greater was the surprise of the lay brother who accompanied him; for although he was a robust young man, he was overcome by fatigue. Fr. Bernardine arrived in Canepina that same evening, transacted his business immediately, and the next morning at an early hour, paying no heed to the persuasions of his son and daughter-in-law, set out for Viterbo, where he arrived in time to say Mass; and in the evening of the same day he reached the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro. The memoirs state that many similar facts might be adduced to illustrate Fr. Bernardine's great love for solitude and retirement.

Few words, if any, are needed to convince the reader of his detachment from the world. In a soul so given to recollection and prayer, there could be no room for earthly affections. Although he might have received from his son whatsoever he had chosen to ask, he never took advantage of this claim; on the contrary, he invariably refused anything offered to him. saying: "Certain delicacies are not for me." And if, in obedience to his superiors, he sometimes visited his son, he never

made it the occasion of any confidence, but invariably behaved as a stranger in the house of a benefactor; nor did he protract his stay beyond the period required by strict necessity.

On an equally high level with his detachment was the love which he cherished for the poor and mortified life he had undertaken in religion. The mere sight of his cell convinced the beholder that it was the habitation of a truly poor man, for its furniture was composed exclusively of articles absolutely indispensable. He continued to observe the same custom as superior; and after his death nothing was found in his room but the usual mattress, the small table, a chair or two, a few books, a crucifix, a rosary, and a small cane which he had used when he went out.

It was, moreover, a great source of edification to see a man of his delicate constitution and poor health observe so scrupulously the penitential rule of the new institute. He would never permit any exceptions to be made in his favor; nor did he complain about the food or ask for exemptions in the matter of observance, although he was often so ill as to spit blood; only under obedience would he submit to any special treatment and even then he returned at the earliest possible moment to our common life, which in those days was like a continual Lent. Sometimes, in order to render the poor food still more distasteful, he would mix it with bitter absinthé powder. In the same way, when the Rule allowed the religious the use of some conveyance on their journeys, he would never avail himself of it, contenting himself with his stick.

These particulars must not lead the reader to believe that this holy religious was of a rough and uncultivated disposition. Quite the contrary. Always cheerful and equable in temper, he was invariably as gentle as a lamb; never angry, irritable or upset. A true imitator of our Blessed Lord, his humility was founded upon the teachings of his Master. He delighted in obedience and subjection to others; and when he had to act as superior it was a positive pain to him. During his life in the world he preferred the society of the poor, and was never known to boast of his noble family. As a religious he was completely silent on this point, and forbade his son to refer to it. His mind being always immersed in holy thoughts, he used to dwell on his own nothingness. He loved to be looked upon as a great sinner and held himself for such. It sometimes happened that a person who had contradicted him would go and ask pardon, upon which the servant of God would embrace him and say: "Oh, if you knew what I am! I am a great sinner. I deserve this and worse." In short, it may be said that his humility was at once the foundation and the crown of all the virtues of this servant of God.



CHAPTER V.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

BEFORE calling Fr. Bernardine to Himself, God willed to purify him with long and painful illnesses which usually began with violent spitting

of blood. On one of these occasions, in 1760, he nearly succumbed; and his son succeeded in persuading the superiors of the Congregation to allow him to take the invalid into his own house that he might receive proper attention. The servant of God, under obedience, resigned himself and went to his native place, Bieda. But the malady becoming worse, it was thought well to fortify him with the last Sacraments, and his death was looked upon as certain. Fr. Bernardine, as soon as he became aware of his son's grief and the reason of it, called him and said: "My son, do not disturb yourself. I shall recover and live for another seven years." And after a few days the fever left him, and the invalid began to grow stronger. Everyone in the house was delighted and looked forward to enjoy his company at least until his health should be quite restored; but Fr. Bernardine, still convalescent, prepared to return to the Retreat at once, where he spent the last Thursday of the Carnival of 1761 in the midst of his religious brethren.

In the year of 1766, having gone to Canepina by order of his superiors, to speak with his son he said to him: "This is the last time that I come home." And because the family would not take him seriously, he replied: "Don't you remember that next winter will see the completion of seven years from that illness which I had at Bieda?" And he shortly afterwards repeated the same prediction to his son by letter.

In October, 1766, he fell ill and got rapidly worse. A religious who one day went to see him overheard him say to himself: "We must now

prepare for a long journey." "And what journey?" asked the visitor. "The journey to eternity," answered Fr. Bernardine, who was quite sure on the point; and, as events showed, was not deceived. For this reason his sole care was to dispose himself for a good death by fervent acts of repentance, resignation and charity. To all who asked after the state of his health, he replied: "Whether we die sooner or later, we must abandon ourselves to the mercy of God." And he would often repeat *Unica spes mea misericordia tua, Domine*. When he drew near his end, he himself asked for the last Sacraments. Out of his great love for the Blessed Sacrament he insisted on receiving the Holy Viaticum on his knees, and in spite of his great weakness, left his bed for that purpose.

Meanwhile, news of his condition was sent to his son, who lost no time in reaching the Retreat, and Fr. Bernardine was much consoled at the opportunity thus afforded him of giving him some final advise. "Son," he said, "live in the holy fear of God; be humble, and for that reason never speak of the nobility of your family. Always make your mental prayer; keep yourself in peace, and I leave you a paternal blessing." After this leave-taking, Extreme Unction was administered, followed by the recommendation of a departing soul, the dying man responding with fervent acts of virtue to the intense edification of all present. And while the religious still surrounded his bed, Fr. Bernardine, after a few moment's agony, gave up his soul to God on April 5th, 1767, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

It is recorded in the memoirs that after his death, several persons obtained graces from our Lord by invoking his intercession; and particular mention is made of the fact that three days after his passage to the other life he appeared to Fr. John of the Heart of Jesus, Rector of the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro, to whom he said: "Father give me the blessing that I may go, with other souls, to glory." And having received the blessing, he disappeared. May our Lord deign to grant that we may imitate the virtues of this blessed Father and be his companions one day in the glories of heaven.





Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer.

CHAPTER I.

HIS YOUTH, RECEPTION INTO THE CONGREGATION, AND BEGINNINGS IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

JOHN Baptist Gerresio—afterwards Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer—was born at Bagnasco, in Piedmont, on the fourteenth day of December, 1734. His father, Guieseppe Gerresio, was an army captain; and his mother, Mary Magdalen, a very devout Christian, did her best to second the efforts of her husband in bringing up the child in the knowledge and practise of virtue. A worthy priest, one of John Baptists' contemporaries, has left it on record that during his primary course, he was in every way an example to his school-fellows, and he maintained his reputation when transferred to Mondovi for the higher studies. Later, he returned home and studied logic under the direction of a Dominican Father.

The precise circumstances which attended his vocation to our Institute have not been recorded,

but he used often to say that he owed this grace to the particular favor of the Blessed Virgin. He received the habit at the age of twenty-one in the novitiate of Monte Argentaro, and passed the time of his probation under the direction of Fr. John Mary of St. Ignatius, and it is related that when asked, during the usual examination which precedes the taking of the habit, his reason for wishing to enter the religious life, he replied: "That I might be a missionary."

During his novitiate he had to endure terrible temptations which arose principally from scruples and were so serious as to endanger his sanity. For this reason his dismissal was under discussion, when the Father Vice-master of novices argued that John Baptist was really undergoing nothing but a spiritual trial, and advised that he should be ordered to compose a certain number of verses in a given time. The suggestion was adopted and the novice acquitted himself of his task so admirably that the Fathers, dismissing the idea of mental disorder, decided to admit him to profession; and he accordingly made his vows on November the 30th, 1756.

He was then sent to the Retreat of S. Eutizio for his course of philosophy and theology in which he succeeded so well that our holy Founder thought himself justified in sending him quickly for ordination, as he had need of capable subjects for vacant posts. Fr. John Baptist, soon after his promotion to the priesthood, was transferred to the Retreat of Montecavo in the capacity of Vice-Rector. Here he had many opportunities of manifesting his zeal for regular observance, while

he devoted all his spare time to the studies which laid the foundation of his future success in the apostleship. The memoirs record that in 1760 he began to give missions in the dioceses of Palestrina and Frascati with great success; and three years later he was recalled to S. Angelo's Retreat near Vetralla, that our holy Founder might always have him at hand for important services.

A sudden mishap, however, threatened to disappoint the hopes founded by his superiors on his early successes. While preaching a triduum of penance at Ronciglione, Fr. John Baptist had the misfortune to break a blood vessel in his breast. He returned to S. Angelo's Retreat, but all remedies were tried in vain until at last hopes of his recovery were all but abandoned, even by our holy Founder who said: "This is a chastisement for me and for poor sinners." But in the end the fervent prayers of his brethren triumphed and the grace of recovery was obtained, as it would seem, miraculously. Fr. John Baptist though as a rule reserved in matters concerning himself, believed it his duty, out of gratitude to the Blessed Virgin, to let it be known that she had twice appeared to him as he lay in bed; the first time to assure him that he would be cured, and the second time to tell him to obey the doctors and the infirmarian. On the occasion of the second visit she also bade him to inculcate in his missions the devout practise of reciting the Angulus thrice daily.

On his recovery, he undertook a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the sanctuary of the Madonna delle Quercia, near Viterbo. For this he set out one winter's morning from S. Angelo's Retreat in

company with a cleric, and walked the whole distance, some twelve miles, fasting. On his arrival at the sanctuary, Fr. John Baptist said Mass, and after a long thanksgiving, returned on foot to the Retreat, his only refreshment consisting of a little bread and fruit which he had brought with him. Thereafter he resumed his missionary labors with results so extraordinary that it seemed as though our Lord had preserved his life with this special end in view.



CHAPTER II.

ELECTED CONSULTOR, THEN PROVINCIAL, ETC.

IN the May of 1769, Fr. John Baptist was engaged on a mission at Trevignano, in the diocese of Sutri, while at St. Angelo's Retreat the General Chapter was being held, in which it was decided to divide the Congregation into two provinces. He was then barely thirty-five of age, nevertheless the Chapter elected him Consultor in the Province of the Presentation. Our holy Founder, who knew better than anyone the capabilities of Fr. John Baptist, not only approved the choice, but took advantage of this circumstance to entrust him and another religious with the duty of putting our Rules into form and of inserting therein certain clauses agreed to in the Chapter just mentioned, that they might be ready for solemn approval by the Holy See. He at once took the work in hand, and finished it so quickly that St.

Paul of the Cross was soon afterwards able to present it to the newly elected Pontiff, Pope Clement XIV.

During the next three years Fr. John Baptist was also much engaged in missionary labors, until the celebration of the Provincial Chapter at our Retreat at Corneto, where he was elected Provincial, in spite of the fact that he had not yet held office as local superior, and in spite also of his own sincere remonstrances and protests. The choice was amply justified in his method of government, which was worthy of a man whose learning was no less solid than his spirituality.

The Congregation, in later years, did not hesitate to profit by the gifts with which he had been endowed by Providence. In May, 1775, the General Chapter was held in Rome, the last over which our holy Founder was destined to preside. St. Paul of the Cross was confirmed in his office as General, while Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer was elected first Consultor General. In the nature of things this dignity should have brought with it a period of comparative repose, but under the actual circumstances it was very far from doing so.

Our holy Father, although his intellect was prompt and vigorous as ever, gave unmistakable signs of advancing age in his constantly increasing weakness. In June, the month following the Chapter, his condition was considered very serious by the doctors who advised the administration of the Holy Viaticum. It was on this occasion that the Saint said how contented he was to die because he left the government of the Congregation in the

capable hands of Fr. John Baptist. Our holy Father, however, was spared to his children for another four months, though from this time Fr. John Baptist practically held the reins of government. His actual rule, of course dated from the death of St. Paul of the Cross in October, according to the statute which orders that when the General dies in office, his duties pass into the hands of the first Consultor General.

Fr. John Baptist's zeal and prudence obtained for him complete success in these new and difficult responsibilities. During the late Autumn he devoted himself to the arrangement of the affairs of the Congregation, resuming in the winter his work in the missionary field, beginning with Pontecorvo, passing thence into the diocese of Todi, on the invitation of Mgr. Struzzieri; and subsequently preaching with great fruit in the dioceses of Viterbo, Civita Castellana and Veroli. In Soriano the fervor of the people was so great that it was decided to enlarge the collegiate church, now no longer capable of accomodating the population.

In the following Spring he returned to Rome to superintend the printing of our Rules and to see through the press an edition of the same in the vulgar tongue for the use of our lay brothers, in fulfilment of a wish expressed by our holy Founder. At the same time he repaired and improved the Retreat of the Presentation on Monte Argentaro as the original fabric showed signs of decay; and for this purpose he transferred the professed clerics to the house of the novitiate, while the novices went to the Retreat of S. Angelo.

After this, he began the visitation of the Retreats in order, promoting everywhere scrupulous observance of the Rule, establishing an exact and uniform method of administration, and a proper registration and satisfaction of obligatory Masses.

In 1777 he was engaged with another matter of more general interest. A year or more had passed since the death of our holy Founder, and already the esteem and veneration manifested for his memory, even in distant countries, brought from all quarters requests for pictures and relics. Fr. John Baptist arranged for a copious distribution of these; and because graces and miracles obtained through the Saint's intercession began to multiply exceedingly, he judged it expedient to introduce the Cause for canonization without loss of time, the more so as the Sovereign Pontiff himself had suggested that steps should be taken in this direction. A postulator of the cause was therefore nominated, and on January 29th of this same year a beginning was made not only in Rome but in other places where the Saint had lived. So rapid was the progress made that in 1784, shortly before he finished his term of office as General, he had the consolation of seeing the ordinary processes completed, and the issue of the decree for the introduction of the Cause. To his diligence, likewise, is due the compilation of a life of our holy Founder, written by Fr. Vincent Mary of St. Paul, afterwards Mgr. Strambi, and published under the government of his successor. In fine, to Fr. John Baptist we owe it that the cause our holy Founder's canonization was so speedily begun and carried to a happy completion.

CHAPTER III.

ELECTED GENERAL OF THE CONGREGATION. HIS WORK IN ITS BEHALF.

THE year 1778 was the time prescribed by our Rule for the convocation of the General Chapter. It was held in Rome, in the Retreat of SS. John and Paul, and by pontifical privilege, Mgr. Struzzieri, bishop of Todi, presided. The Capitular Fathers were nine in number, all men full of the spirit of God and pupils of our holy Founder.

The election of the new General was quickly decided, all being in favor of Fr. John Baptist, although he was only forty-four years of age. He himself opposed the decision to the best of his power, both by word and in writing; but in the end he was obliged to bow to the will of the Capitular Fathers who remained firm, and his election was proclaimed. Among other matters determined upon in this Chapter was one suggested by Fr. John Baptist himself: the better arrangement of our regulations, already begun by our holy Founder, which were then to be transcribed and distributed to the Retreats with the obligation of reading them in public and observing them.

At the close of the Chapter, one of the first things which occupied the attention of Fr. John Baptist was the reorganization of the novitiate at Monte Argentaro and the restoration of the church and Retreat of the Presentation, to which the

professed were to return. With the help of money collected for the purpose, he was able, without much delay, to bring this work to a successful completion. He then gave fresh attention to the cause of our holy Founder's canonization; and in view of the many requests for missions which poured in upon him, he determined to spend the winter in Campagna in these apostolic ministrations.

In the beginning of the Spring of 1779 he returned to the Retreat of S. Angelo to arrange for a journey to the Marshes. Many influential personages had exerted themselves to obtain the extension of our Congregation in those parts, and after much negotiation a foundation had been determined upon in Morrovalle. The property available consisted of a small church dedicated to the Madonna della Quercia with a hermitage adjoining, and a piece of land belonging to the Bandini family. The proper permission being forthcoming, as well as a special Rescript from the Pope, Fr. John Baptist determined to go there in person and take possession of the place.

For this purpose he took with him two priests, a lay brother, and a servant to whose care were confided two mules laden with necessary articles. The journey occupied many days, for it was made on foot; and the travellers, unknown as they were, had much to endure in the way of insult and bad treatment. On their arrival they found only the hermit, who for the moment was disposed to give up to them but a part of his dwelling, consisting of three rooms on the ground floor. Notwithstanding these close quarters, the

religious settled down in the course of two or three days and began to practise the observance, such was the fervor of Fr. John Baptist. His sufferings, however, were not yet over. He was obliged before long to visit the city of Fermo, in order to present himself to the Archbishop; and here, because he was unknown, he suffered many humiliations and discomforts, which he bore with great patience. Then, having obtained the desired consent, he returned to Morrovalle, where, with the help of four other religious, whom he had called to his assistance, he established the work on a firm footing.

Having accomplished so much, Fr. John Baptist now repaired to the Retreat of St. Eutizio for his visitation, which work he continued throughout the Province of the Presentation, intending afterwards to visit the Campagna Province in a similar manner. But the repeated requests of bishops for missions could not be disregarded, and for the sake of apostolic duties he was obliged to depute another religious to finish the visitation in his stead.

In the following year, 1781, he was requested by the Propaganda to send some of his religious to the mission of Bulgaria. Similar overtures had been made to our holy Founder, but for some reason they had remained in suspense. This time they produced a more satisfactory result. Fr. John Baptist presented two members of our Congregation and both were accepted. One of them, Fr. Francis of the Divine Love, was nominated bishop of Nicopoli, and was the first of the series of Passionist bishops of that See.

In the last year of his government, Fr. John Baptist was able to make two other foundations, of these the first was at Anquillara, not far from Rome, where an abandoned convent of which he himself went to take possession, was made over to the Congregation; but in the end he was obliged to retire from the place owing to the extremely bad air. The other was in the Marshes, and the result of its establishment was happier, although it was not achieved without much opposition. The site was near Recanati, and the building was begun and finished with the help of many generous contributors. In the midst of all these cares, his prudence and zeal ever made themselves felt; and at the end of his term of office it was found that he had kept alive in the Congregation the spirit of religious discipline, as well as the form of observance established by our holy Founder.



CHAPTER IV.

SECOND CONSULTOR, AFTERWARDS
RE-ELECTED GENERAL.

AT the beginning of 1784, Fr. John Baptist sent out a circular letter convoking the General Chapter for April 1st, although as that date would fall in Lent, advantage might easily have been taken of the Indult of the Holy See which provided for a delay of three months under such circumstances. But Fr. John Baptist's one idea

was to unburden himself of the responsibilities of government, and the Capitular Fathers agreed to gratify him. Fr. John Mary of St. Ignatius was chosen to succeed him in the office of General and Fr. John Baptist was elected second Consultor. The arrangement pleased him so much that he was not only the first to offer obedience to the new General, but succeeded in obtaining the revocation of a decree passed in the preceding Chapter to the effect that ex-Generals should have precedence over all others immediately after the Generalship itself.

When the Chapter was over he obtained permission to withdraw into solitude to refresh his spirit after his long employment in managing affairs and to re-establish his health after the fatigues of office. He accordingly went to Monte Argentaro, where he was a source of great edification to the community. But his time of repose was all too brief. Hearing of his recovery, the new General felt obliged to avail himself of his services, owing to the numerous requests for missions. In the Autumn of the same year he preached at Citta della Pieve; in the winter he was engaged in the diocese of Sutri, whence he passed to Monte S. Oreste, and then to Anguillara, where, after giving a very successful mission, he assisted at the opening of our Retreat which was also attended by Fr. John Mary the new General, who came from Rome for the purpose. Immediately afterwards, he received orders from the General to visit all the Retreats in his stead. This work Fr. John Baptist constantly interspersed with apostolic labors, much to the

detriment of his health. He suffered especially from gout during these years, but persevered bravely in spite of this troublesome malady.

In this way he labored on until the year 1790 when, in the Chapter held at Corneto, he was again burdened with the office of General, notwithstanding his fears and protests.

In this second term of office, Fr. John Baptist had need of all his patience, strength and confidence in God, because the whirlwind of the French Revolution had invaded Italy also, bringing with it many fears, vexations and difficulties. The General undertook the visitation of all the Retreats in person, beginning with that of Recanati, where he remained some time superintending the building of the Retreat, and doing his best to prevent the incurring of useless expense, which he considered contrary to the spirit of poverty proper to our Congregation. Thence he passed to the Retreat of Pieveterina, and afterwards to the newly founded house of Gubbio and the other communities in the Province of the Patrimony. In the May of 1792 he visited the Retreats of the Province of Campagna, and then returned to Rome where he arranged with the Congregation of Propaganda de Fide a second mission to Bulgaria, the two missionaries dispatched there some years previously having been obliged to return to Italy, owing to the war between Turkey and Russia.

In the year 1793 he forwarded with much zeal the cause of our holy Founder's canonization and was instrumental in procuring the commencement of the Apostolic processes, which were compiled

with so much dispatch that in the following year the decree of approbation was issued. Unfortunately, Fr. John Baptist's health now began to cause anxiety, principally on account of the frequent attacks of the gout; nevertheless his fervor of spirit supported him wonderfully in the anxieties of government. In the winter of 1795, notwithstanding his sufferings, he began a second visitation of the Retreats, but was compelled to depute another religious to finish it, that he might have leisure to put matters in order for the Chapter of 1796. In the February of that year, he suffered a great loss in the death of Fr. John Mary of St. Ignatius, who had been his novice Master and afterwards his inseparable companion for many years. Trusting, however, in the help of God for the support of the Congregation, in spite of this severe affliction, he issued the circular letter convoking the Chapter to meet at Aquillara, as being a retired spot where the Fathers would be free from the interruptions of ill-disposed persons. Fr. John Baptist was relieved of the office of General in which he was succeeded by Fr. Joseph Mary of the Crucified, while he himself was chosen Procurator General, and so remained for the next four years—the last of his busy life.



CHAPTER V.

HIS ZEAL AND PRUDENCE.

BEFORE recounting Fr. John Baptist's happy passage to eternity, we must briefly mention the virtues for which his life was mainly con-

spicuous, beginning with those which distinguished him in his government of the Congregation. To the Institute he had embraced in his youth, and which, in after years, he was called upon to rule, he was so devotedly attached that it may be truly said that in comparison with its well-being and progress, he counted health, convenience, reputation, even life itself as nothing. In his zeal for observance he may have inclined somewhat to rigor, but this he was the first to acknowledge and lament; but, as the memoirs tell us, his excesses in this regard had their origin in scruples, with which he was always troubled and in his horror of even the smallest sin.

The weariness and bitterness he had to suffer during his term of office are beyond the power of words to describe. Impressed as he was with the gravity of his responsibilities, he never deviated from the course he had undertaken, no matter what the risk. Once, because certain local superiors exhibited some repugnance in obeying some orders of his, which were perfectly just, and had made it understood that they would resign rather than give in, the zealous Father remained unmoved, but simply awaited the time when their annual patent would expire, and then refused to confirm them, substituting Vicars in their places. The complaints raised by the Cardinal of York, bishop of Frascati, against the religious of the Retreat of Montecorvo, whom he wished to have at his disposal, are well known. Fr. John Baptist did his best to bring the prelate to a better mind, but, failing to do so, he had recourse to the Sovereign Pontiff, who completely

justified him. The result was that the Cardinal forbade the religious to hear confessions or to ask alms in his diocese, so that failing the help of benefactors, they must have abandoned the Retreat. The dispute seems to have lasted during a whole term of Fr. John Baptist's rule, with what regret to him can be well imagined. Nevertheless he was fully determined to abandon the Retreat rather than give way in a matter in which right was plainly on his side. Such was the effect of the scrupulous jealousy with which he regarded duties and of his sense of responsibility towards God.

For the same reason, as his conduct was unexceptionable in all matters of observance, he exacted the same fidelity to the prescriptions of the Rule from all the religious. When he observed any defect, especially if it proceeded from laziness, negligence or carelessness, he was inexorable, and was not satisfied until he had administered correction and penance, when necessary. If however, he was severe, he was invariably just, and never unreasonably hard. For this reason, although he took care to be as well informed as possible, he was slow in giving ear to reports; and if he found that he had been misled, he did his best to make amends. Among many examples, we may cite the fact that to a certain religious, about whom falsehood had been circulated, he gave some responsible charge after one of the Chapters. Another, who had been sent to a certain Retreat by way of penance, he made Rector of that same house, having finally discovered that the charges brought against him were untrue.

In the same way he ordered a double supper to be served to a lay brother, who had been condemned to bread and water, because he found the accusations brought against him were not borne out by facts. These few instances may serve to show that if Fr. John Baptist was rather inclined to severity, this did not proceed from any hastiness in judgment or over-quickness of character, but solely from his love of order and observance, and from the love that he bore to the Congregation.

For the better confirmation of this, we may note that the memoirs state that when there were no defects to be corrected, he was as easy to lead as a child. It happened that one year in the annual rehearsal of the ceremonies of the Mass, which is customary among us, he was informed that he delayed too long over the Memento. Fr. John Baptist answered nothing, but from that day forward he did not offend in that way again. A young postulant was handed over by him to be examined by one of the religious, and Fr. John Baptist understanding from the latter that the young man was weak in his Latin, decided not to admit him. However, meeting the religious one day, he asked him what he thought; and because he gave it as his opinion that considering the paucity of subjects, it seemed to be the will of God that he should take them as they came. Fr. John Baptist at once gave in and accepted the postulant, who became an excellent religious. On another occasion, when making his visitation in one of the Retreats, he confided to his companion the manner in which he proposed to remedy a certain abuse. The companion, however, pointed

out that this would most certainly give rise to uncharitable comments in other Retreats at the expense of a particular religious. Upon this Fr. John Baptist immediately changed his mind and said no more of the proposed remedy. In this way he showed very clearly the rectitude of his intentions and his purity of heart in his method of ruling subjects.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS EXACTITUDE IN REGULAR OBSERVANCE.

IF the fervor of a religious is always manifest in his exact observance of his rule, then was Fr. John Baptist a shining example to his brethren. In point of observance, the memoirs tell us, he was unexceptionable. For him it was enough that anything was prescribed by the Rule to set store by it and carry it out to the letter. And this compliance was by no means merely external, it came from within, prompt, fervent and unfailing to the time of his death.

One of his first thoughts, when he was staying in a Retreat, was to have the clock in perfectly good order; and although, as superior, he had many cares to distract him, he astonished all by the punctuality with which he would appear for community duties at the first sound of the bell. And if it happened that the religious appointed to give the signal was behind time but a few seconds, Fr. John Baptist would himself sound the bell to wake

the community. Even when he was ill he would rise from bed for this purpose; or if unable to rise he would make some noise to attract attention. In all community acts he was the first to appear; and although he suffered much from gout and other complaints, he never waited until he was completely cured but resumed the practise of observance as soon as he could get upon his feet. It excited pity, say the memoirs, to see this grave man, maimed as he was, making all speed to go down stairs limping, in his bare feet, his sandals in one hand while with the other he supported himself by the rail of the wall, that he might arrive in choir, if not first, yet as quickly as he was able. And sometimes, when he was unable to move his legs freely, he was seen to jump from one step to the next.

But his exactitude in the observance was not limited to attendance in choir. One of the essential features of our spirit, and therefore much insisted upon in the Rule, is solitude. Now, Fr. John Baptist was truly a man dead and crucified to the world. He had much occasion to travel and converse with seculars, yet did he never change in his affection for retirement; and even when he was old, his detachment from all men and all things was that of a novice. He was most unwilling to receive news or to talk with seculars when not constrained by necessity; and when he was General, to free himself from the payment of visits he received, he liked to be called away in order that he might have a pretext to withdraw. When in Rome, he hardly ever left the Retreat, except for a short time on the day

appointed for the community walk, while he scarcely knew his way about the streets in the heart of the city, although he had lived there for many years. When at home, he rarely left his cell, and if he knew that seculars were in the garden, he would forego his walk. When on a journey, he would never go out of the way in order to look at curious objects; he was ever anxious to get back again to the Retreat, and in order to do this he would brave risks, rather than sleep in the houses of seculars, even benefactors.

And this same spirit led him to be very exacting with the religious. When he had the opportunity of making a new foundation, he would not take advantage of it unless he saw that everything could be carried out in accordance with the Rule, no matter what pressure might be brought to bear upon him. It was only with great difficulty that he permitted his subjects to leave the Retreat, and he would go so far as to declaim against the custom of begging alms if he saw the slightest risk of abuse. In Rome he was averse to the religious attending the churches where festivals were being celebrated; he even disliked them going down to our own church when there was a concourse of people, except for functions in which all took part. On occasions of great solemnity, he absolutely forebade any one to go out of the Retreat, and it is related that one year when he was staying in the house of the Presentation he detained there during the whole of Holy Week a lay brother who had been sent thither by the Rector of our Retreat at Corneto in search of fish.

In the matter of silence, too, he was most exemplary. It was difficult to find a tongue so well under control as his. He was never known to speak or to answer anyone who addressed him in places and times forbidden by the Rule; and when obliged to speak, his words were limited to the requirements of strict necessity. On his journeys his silence was even stricter than usual, for practically his whole time was passed in prayer. When superior he was most particular that silence should be kept by all, and he would make the circuit of the house by night to see that it was observed, while he would often present himself in the community offices for the same purpose. Nor did he limit his strictness to speech; he would not tolerate noise of any kind, banging of doors or windows, or heavy walking.

Of poverty, likewise, Fr. John Baptist was a most perfect lover. In spite of many indispositions, he never exempted himself from common life; and if, when seriously ill, he allowed special food to be given him, it was with manifest distaste and pain. When travelling, if he was treated with any sort of distinction, he rarely took advantage of it; and once when a lay brother had served him with a somewhat abundant repast, he reprimanded him severely. It was noticed, too, that when he took food tears would flow from his eyes. His cell differed in no respect from those of the other religious, nor did he take advantage of his office to gather things about him for his particular use. It is related that once he arrived at our Retreat at Terracina with some chocolate in a small basket, for the purpose of making presents to our

benefactors. In the evening he carried the basket into the library lest he should offend against the rule which forbids even superiors to keep eatables in their cells. In the matter of clothing, he followed the ordinary rule, and, often, that he might not transgress it, he would have his old habit mended; once, even, a brother found him mending his habit in his cell. For the same love of poverty, he continued to travel on foot, until age and infirmity rendered it impossible. Later, when his years made it imperative, he would use a horse; but a carriage only for very long and difficult journeys. He gave up his cup of coffee in the morning for the same reason, and discontinued the use of snuff, notwithstanding the relief to head and stomach which his limited indulgence in it had given him.

But not to be too prolix, let us conclude this chapter by saying everything in one word, namely, that Fr. John Baptist maintained to the end of his life the fervent love of regular observance with which he had set out on his religious career.



CHAPTER VII.

HIS CHARITY.

THOSE, perhaps, who have read that Fr. John Baptist, in his government was inclined to be rather severe, will have formed the opinion that he was a man of hard and intractable character. That this was far from being the case, the instan-

ces we are about to cite, confirmed as they are by written testimony of an eyewitness, will plainly show, Fr. John Baptist, we learn from this source, was indeed a most exemplary superior and a zealous upholder of regular observance, but he was at the same time a most tender father, who loved his neighbor, and his children in religion above all. So that it may be said of him that he sacrificed himself for their good in the truest acceptation of the words.

To secure their advantage, both temporal and spiritual, he spared nothing, not even his health, convenience or reputation. We shall say nothing of the difficulties and tribulations which he met with in the course of his official visitations. He himself made no account of them, and, so long as he could be of use by his presence or influence, he thought nothing of any judgments which might be passed upon him. It was known that under his rule many religious abandoned the Congregation of their own will. He was content to say: "There would be no room for surprise, if charity permitted me to tell all." On one occasion he went from Rome to Monte Argentaro without anyone being able to guess the reason; but it afterwards appeared that he had undertaken the journey to try to induce a priest, who had asked for letters dimissorial, to alter his mind. The Father superior did not succeed in his charitable intent, but he was satisfied that he had done all that was possible. His solicitude to be informed of the wants of each one was the subject of general admiration as also was his care to see that they were satisfied. In his visitations he speedily supplied

any lack in the reasonable convenience of the community, and in one instance did not scruple to encroach upon the common fund and order that certain necessary expenses should be incurred while he was still in the Retreat.

The religious, well aware of the charity of their superior, had recourse to him with confidence and were answered either by word of mouth or in writing with all kindness. In granting their requests, however, he never overlooked the claims of justice and reason; for his charity was extremely well-ordered, according to the principle of St. Bernard that "it is not charity but perversion to feed the passions and foment abuses and disorders against regular observance."

His care of the sick, as we learn from certain testimony, was extreme. To procure their recovery he left no expedient untried, easily allowing them a change of residence, if the air of the Retreat in which they lived did not suit them. He made no difficulty, also, in ordering them to Rome, if they had need of special remedies or assistance. Nor did he fail to visit them often and console them, helping their necessities, if occasion required, with his own hands.

Nor was his charity limited to the religious. It was extended to all, and on all occasions. One of the things he was most careful to inculcate on local superiors, was the regular distribution of alms at the gate. He arrived once at a Retreat where he knew that in consequence of a bad harvest the alms had been sensibly diminished. Fr. John Baptist was much displeased and gave strict orders that for the future, alms were to be distri-

buted according to necessity, adding that it was not right to refuse God that which had been received from Him. A servant of the Retreat of SS. John and Paul had broken his leg in a fall. Fr. John Baptist had him removed to the hospital, sending every day to enquire after his progress; and because the poor man was permanently lamed, he ordered that he should be maintained at the expense of the community as long as he lived. To another man who had been many years in the service of the Retreats at Terracina and Paliano, he granted the privilege of affiliation accorded to benefactors, he accepted him as a Tertiary, ^{and} ordering ^{it} that after his death he should be buried in our church with the religious habit and that many suffrages should be offered for him.

Let us add that his charity towards his neighbor was so great that for fear he might be wanting in it, especially when making corrections, he profited by his journey to the Marshes to visit the holy house of Loretto, that he might obtain from Our Lady the grace of being more moderate and amiable in correcting his subjects. This they knew from his own lips, because on his return to the Retreat of St. Eutizio he mentioned the matter in public, and while recommending the religious to be devout to Our Lady, spoke of the grace she had granted him.



CHAPTER VIII.

HIS HUMILITY.

FATHER John Baptist had learned from our holy Founder that the distinguishing feature of our Congregation was the spirit of humility, and he himself never tired in impressing this sentiment on the religious whom he governed. In making new foundations he took great care that the Retreat and the church should breathe the spirit of humility; and for this reason, when the first time he saw our Retreat at Recanati, he made many complaints as to its sumptuous style, declaring that whoever had been the cause of it had taken no little responsibility on himself. Matters having proceeded too far, he was obliged to be satisfied with taking something from the length of the church and diminishing the height of the campanile. For the same reason, that our Retreats might be distinguished by their humility, he would not permit them to be called by the title of "holy," saying that this was fitting only in case of sanctuaries celebrated on account of the Patriarchs and Founders who had dwelt in them. He wished also that the religious should bear themselves with humility, and could not tolerate complaints that seculars had not treated them with sufficient deference.

Exacting as he was in all these matters with others, still more careful was he to practise humility himself. Endowed by God with rare talents, he was never known, say the memoirs, to manifest pride or complacency, or to think anything

of himself. From the time he began to preach missions he used to stand with others at the hearth, and rubbing his feet in the ashes, would say: "This is what I am fit for," meaning that even in missions he was only good to mix the earth. Without doubt he was one of the most able missionaries of his time, so much so that bishops and people vied with one another in trying to secure his services: nevertheless he was never heard to boast of this, or to prefer himself to others. Upon the subject of his own affairs he was as one dumb, and as though he feared vain-glory even in humility, abstained from saying anything to his own detriment, leaving that to others without taking the trouble to justify himself.

From this poor opinion which he had of himself proceeded his dislike to be placed in a position of authority over others, and the resistance he always made when threatened with the duties of office, protesting that he knew his own incapacity for them and the danger they involved to his soul. Humble as he was, however he was free from obstinacy, and ever ready to bow his neck to the yoke of God's holy will, to take the cross which was laid upon his shoulders, and to bear it as best he could. But responsibility, in his case, brought with it no temptation to pride. When he was Provincial, and even General, he did not lay aside his custom of sweeping his own cell; and he would often serve at table religious who arrived at the Retreat during a journey. When travelling he would ordinarily carry his bag on his shoulders, and passing through the city of Terini on his road

to the Marshes he walked along the streets in this way until he reached the house of the benefactor with whom he was to pass the night.

His own defects served him as occasions of humbling himself. Once, in Rome, when he was acting as Vice General, he ordered the Rector of the house to dismiss the servants for some shortcomings. The Fr. Rector thought it his duty to dissuade him, but finding him firm, did not hesitate in the end to say that it would be better to leave him (the Rector) to settle the business. However, the Rector afterwards entered into himself, and full of regret for the small respect with which he had treated his superior, begged pardon for his fault in the refectory. This act edified the whole community, who were still more astonished and edified when Fr. John Baptist, instead of blaming the Rector, said to him: "Let us both humble ourselves and ask pardon of God; I, for my imprudence, and you for your hastiness."

Similar acts of humiliation were not infrequent with him, when he had made mistakes or in some way exceeded his duty: and he had no difficulty in making them in writing, by speech or on his knees. In one Retreat he asked pardon of all the religious, kneeling in the middle of the choir; while in another he begged forgiveness because he had raised his voice in making certain remarks on observance. In short, such was his love for humility that he seemed always on the watch for any opportunity which might present itself to exercise himself in it. If he saw any dirt he would run for a broom and remove it; and if he saw that water was wanting in the lavatory

he would go and fill the vessels. Little things, these in themselves, perhaps, but sufficient to indicate the spirit by which he was animated and to edify the religious who witnessed them.



CHAPTER IX.

HIS PIETY: AND DEVOTION TO OUR LADY.

IT is no common thing to find, even among religious, great activity in exterior works combined with singular devotion and spirituality. Their co-existence is, however, an indubitable sign of piety and fervor, and in the case of Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer, who was, at one and the same time a model of industry and prayer. That he might have more time for meditation, he used to rise before the community; and notwithstanding the multiplicity of his occupations, he very rarely absented himself from the common prayer. Owing to his custom of secrecy, we are without certain indications of the spiritual favors bestowed upon him by the Almighty; but from certain results which it was impossible altogether to hide, it was evident that he was one of those souls in whom our Lord takes particular delight.

As one who had been his secretary wrote, to have witnessed his exactitude in the observance, his constant recollection, his zeal for souls, his strength and fortitude in the midst of so many difficulties, was to be in possession of so many

proofs of his communication with God. The mere sight of him, say the memoirs, was sufficient to convince one that he was truly a spiritual man—a man of prayer. His very presence at the altar or in the pulpit edified all who saw him. His composure, his gravity, his devotion and the frequent tears which accompanied his prayers, moved beholders to devotion.

But Fr. John Baptist's piety was most apparent in his devotion to most holy Mary, for whom his love was indescribable. Whensoever he heard her name, he uncovered his head and bowed. He almost always celebrated Mass at her altar, and it was noticed that when, after communion, he raised his eyes to her holy image, he became affected to tears. In his needs holy Mary was his refuge; in her he placed all his hopes, directing to her an infinity of little acts of homage.

All on fire to spread devotion towards her, he caused many pictures of her to be printed with devout exhortations; and when occasion offered, he never failed to speak of her and magnify her praises. He was many times importuned by the religious to speak of her at the time of evening prayer and always consented without difficulty. Often being requested to do the same in place of the customary discourse which we call "examen" he complied with such fervor as to bring tears to the eyes of all. Indeed, it was a common saying that if anyone wished to rekindle his devotion towards the Mother of God, he had only to listen while Fr. John Baptist was speaking of her. In his missions, likewise, his eloquence on the subject brought numberless sinners to God.

It seems almost certain that among his resolutions was one by which he bound himself never to refuse a favor put forward in the name of Mary. And although he was always very firm in holding to any decision he had arrived at, he was known suddenly to change his mind under such circumstances. Once, at the Retreat of Terracina, he had postponed the clothing of a novice because he was afflicted with periodical fevers. The young man was inconsolable until, meeting Fr. Vincent Mary of St. Paul, the latter suggested to him that he should ask this favor of the General for the love of Mary. A moving scene was the consequence; for Fr. John Baptist, appealed to in this way, immediately answered yes, and then, a little while afterwards, overpowered by scruples, he withdrew his consent, and said no; so, until the hour arrived for the ceremony, it was necessary to keep repeating the name of Mary to him in order to induce him to clothe the postulant: and finally, such was the emotion of the good Father in making his discourse that he was dissolved in tears. In the novitiate of Monte Argentaro a similar thing happened, and many others might be cited to prove his devotion to the Blessed Mother of God.

We must now relate how Our Lady rewarded her devout servant with special favors, which, notwithstanding his habitual secrecy, he was unable to hide. We read that often when he said Mass at her altar, he was seen to tremble in every limb, and, as though he were resisting some strong force, which would bear him upward, he had to keep firm hold on the table of the altar. On a

certain occasion, after a passing visit to the Retreat of S. Angelo, he said Mass very early, that he might continue his journey in good time. But his purpose was frustrated, because he was detained at the altar for an hour and a half, while he seemed to his server to be all aflame like a seraph, rapt quite out of himself. We have already referred to the apparition which he had during his illness in 1766, and we shall now mention another fact which we find registered under the date 1777. A young man, a member of the noble family of the Lelli, of Viterbo, had been sent to Rome by his father that he might fit himself by study to occupy some post of importance in the Church. But at the age of twenty-one he seemed quite otherwise inclined, and began to lead a life which was not altogether satisfactory. This fact having reached the ears of the Sovereign Pontiff, who had taken an interest in him, he received orders from the Pope to retire to the house of SS. John and Paul and not to leave it without permission. The young man obeyed at once; but after a time, overcome with weariness, he resolved to leave. God, however, who had destined him for His service, inspired him to go and take leave of the superior, and with that intention he went to the cell of Fr. John Baptist, who was then General. Receiving no answer to his knock, he softly opened the door, and to his great astonishment beheld the Father in ecstasy, raised from the ground before a picture of our Blessed Lady. Much frightened, the young man closed the door retired to his room where he burst into tears, and changing his resolution, determined to enter the

Congregation, into which he was received not long afterwards, persevering until death under the name of Fr. Louis of the Most Holy Sacrament.

The paper picture of our Lady which Fr. John Baptist had kept at the head of his bed for so many years was painted by order of our superiors after his death, it being the general opinion that by means of it he had obtained many favors. On one occasion, when a priest, afterwards one of our religious, asked him in the course of conversation if it were true that this same Madonna had spoken to him, he could not deny it. At such a question, Fr. John Baptist blushed, shed tears, and changed the subject.

Let us add a particular favor which, through the intercession of Holy Mary, Fr. John Baptist obtained for Thomas Palomba, at Civita Vecchia. This man was at the point of death when the Father happened to pass, and the affliction of the family so touched him, that he went straight to the domestic oratory and there, prostrating himself before the image of Mary, begged her to cure the invalid. Shortly afterwards, returning to the bedside, he assured the sick man's wife that he would not die, adding these words: "Even though I should see him exposed in the Church, I would say that he is not dead." And in fact from that moment Palomba began to get better and was soon out of danger. The people in the house questioned the Father as to how he foresaw this result, but he simply replied: "Ask our Blessed Lady." But to later enquiries, however, he answered plainly that Mary had assured him of this grace.

CHAPTER X.

HIS LAST YEARS AND DEATH.

IN the year 1796 Fr. John Baptist, as we have seen, was relieved of the office of General and chosen Procurator General of the Congregation. He then retired for some months to Paliano, returning to Rome in the autumn. Shortly afterwards he was sent to give a mission at Fabbrica, which he was compelled to give up owing to gout which nailed him to his bed. Returned once more to Rome he was obliged to travel early in the ensuing year, owing to political disturbances, the outcome of the French Revolution. Pope Pius VI was deported, the clergy banished, and the religious Orders suppressed. Our General, together with Fr. John Baptist, fled to Corneto, and later, to the Retreat of St. Angelo, where the latter fell ill once more.

After some months, now better in health, he returned to Rome, though he was obliged to renounce the office of Procurator, because the Republican Government refused to recognise the higher superiors of religious Orders. This suspension lasted for three years, during which time, as we learn of our written testimony, Fr. John Baptist lived a life of continual edification by his regular observance, his humility and patience. Tormented as he was by the pains of gout, he uttered no complaint, but remaining apart in solitude, engaged much in prayer.

With the end of the Republican Government

early in 1800, he resumed his office of Procurator General. However, towards the end of this year his malady reappeared with alarming symptoms, and the doctor, on the occasion of his first visit, already declared that there was no hope of saving him. Of this, the Father himself was convinced and began to prepare for death. By the providence of God, say the memoirs, he retained his senses to his last breath, so that his death was a school of virtue: an instance of the truth of the maxim which teaches that as a man has lived, so he dies.

His occupation in the midst of the pain and weariness of his sickness was one only: to be recollected in God and pray. Until almost the last day he continued to recite the divine office, when he had to desist out of obedience to an order from the General. The same superior, in deference to a general desire, wished to have a portrait of Fr. John Baptist painted before his death, and for this purpose an artist was introduced into the sick-room behind some of the religious who surrounded his bed. But the servant of God, detecting his presence, began to raise his voice, saying; "What are they doing? What are they doing? Let them be sent away;" so that it became necessary to content him and give up the idea.

It was a beautiful sight, wrote an eye witness to behold this man, truly detached from all, and from himself; he took what was given him without a word; and the Father General, during one of his visits, said to those who stood by: "See! he who knew how to rule, knows also how to obey."

In all his pains he uttered no lament, not even when the gout was at its worst. On the contrary, he gave constant signs of his full conformity to the will of God, having often on his lips this affectionate invocation: "Madonna mia ! Madonna mia !" Some of the religious, who knew his filial devotion to the Queen of Heaven, fastened a picture of her to the foot of the bed, to the evident satisfaction of the dying Father, who looked at it with devout and tender sighs. Once Fr. Vincent Mary of St. Paul, addressed him by the name of Mary, and his eyes filled with tears.

Meanwhile the malady made rapid progress, and on the 8th of January, it was judged expedient to administer the last Sacraments, which he received with unspeakable happiness, first asking pardon of all with great humility, protesting himself unworthy to wear the religious habit, and declaring his wish to despoil himself of all, leaving in the hands of his superiors the few poor things he had used. Just at dawn on the 9th of January it was seen that the end was near, and the community were called to the infirmary to help him with their prayers. And as they prayed, the dying man slowly raised his arm and let it fall just as slowly on the bed, accompanying the act with a loud cry ; after which he gave up his blessed soul to its Creator. One of the religious, on hearing this cry, reflected that this circumstance constituted a last resemblance between Fr. John Baptist's life and that of Jesus Christ, of whom it is written that He died with a loud cry.

In this manner ended the career of Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer, whose memory, to-

gether with those of many others, will always be in benediction among us. Because there can be no doubt, that in spite of a thousand difficulties, he succeeded in maintaining intact the deposit of regular observance, confided to him by our holy Founder himself; and that by his example he kept alive the spirit of the Congregation.





Brother Joseph of Holy Mary.

CHAPTER I.

HIS YOUTH, AND LIFE IN THE WORLD.

WHEN it pleased our loving Lord to establish in His Church our little Congregation, He not only provided it with priests, who, by their doctrine, holiness and zeal, were the main columns of the spiritual building, but also with lay-brothers, who, by their manual labors and fervent prayers, served it as substantial supports. One of these, and the first who received from God this holy vocation, was Brother Joseph of Holy Mary, of whom we shall now give some account, drawn from the memoirs which remain to us, in the hope that we may thus gather not only some idea of the holiness of the life of this fervent religious, but also an effectual stimulus to follow his edifying example.

Joseph was born in November, 1721, the son of devout and honest parents, Joachim Pitruzzero and Anna Casalaina, at Augusta, not far from Syracuse, in Sicily. Baptised on the 29th day of the same month, he received a Christian educa-

tion. While still a child, he had the misfortune to lose his father, but his mother confided him to the care of her brother, from whom he learnt the business of a pastry cook. He had no sooner entered his uncle's shop than he showed how well he had profited by his religious training. He was very diligent in his employment, avoiding pastimes and friendships with boys of his own age. He gave early signs of his inclination for a solitary, devout and mortified life: for during the time he was not actually engaged in his employment, he retired to a corner of the shop to say his prayers, and especially the rosary. He fasted every day, eating only once; and on Wednesdays and Fridays he took nothing but bread and water, as also on the vigils of festivals, of which he was careful to remind others as they occurred.

One of his principal devotions was to approach frequently the Sacraments of Confession and Communion; and on those days he would keep himself more than usually silent and recollected. Thus did his fervor keep pace with his years. His aunt related that sometimes she would repeat some fable for his amusement, when he would invariably ask her to break it off and tell him instead some incident, miraculous or otherwise, in the lives of the saints. To such things he listened with much pleasure, and would ask for their repetition. In the matter of purity he was very careful. One day, the serving woman, seeing him quiet and retired in some corner, ventured to pronounce some word of double meaning. Not knowing what she meant, he asked his aunt to explain. Upon this, all those present began to

laugh; but Joseph, whose suspicions were now aroused, begged his aunt to tell the woman never to say the word again.

While Joseph was with his uncle, a colonel who was about to leave for Naples, wished to take him into his service. The boy willingly consented, on condition that his relations had no reason against his departure. His uncle was quite agreeable, but his mother opposed the idea, as he was her only son. The project was therefore given up. However, Providence disposed that the vessel in which the colonel had embarked should be driven back by contrary winds. As soon as Joseph heard this, he begged his mother to reconsider her decision, and she ultimately consented to his departure.

Arrived in Naples, Joseph evidently found the city much to his taste; for when his master returned to Augusta, he determined to remain and take service with another officer of the garrison. The arrangement, however, did not last long; he went with his employer to Gaeta, where apparently the latter had no permanent need for his services. He then returned to Naples, where he became one of the servers of the church of the "Carminè Maggiore," supporting himself as well as he could on alms.

Under these circumstances, our Lord exercised him much in patience and self-abnegation, in order to dispose him for His own designs in his regard. After a little time Joseph took service with a captain who was a very devout Christian, and allowed his servant plenty of time to attend to his pious exercises. Of his manner of life at

this time, we have some knowledge from the testimony of the captain's wife, who declared that, while full of fervor in his devotions, he was most exact in obedience and in the discharge of his duties; and, judging from the account given by his confessor, it was at this time that Almighty God began to favor him with those extraordinary gifts of which we shall later refer more in detail.



CHAPTER II.

HIS VOCATION, NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION.

WHEN all was disposed by Divine Providence to lead Joseph to the desired end, his master being transferred to the garrison of Orbetello, took his servant with him. Here he made the acquaintance of our holy Founder, who at that time was establishing the Congregation on Monte Argentaro. To see and hear St. Paul of the Cross preaching a mission at Orbetello, and to feel himself inspired to follow him in his new method of life, was for Joseph one and the same thing. Therefore, after many prayers to God, he requested to be received into the Congregation.

The Saint, after seeing the young man several times and finding in him all the signs of a true vocation, resolved to content him; but knowing how dear he was to his employers, he foresaw that it would be no easy thing to obtain their consent. This notwithstanding, and supported by the certainty of God's will in the matter, he de-

cided to take upon himself the office of mediator. He therefore went to the family and courteously, almost playfully, said that he wished to ask a favor. Full of esteem for the holy man, they replied that he had only to ask and whatever he wished should be granted. The Saint then added: "I have need of your cook, because I am going to give a sumptuous banquet at Monte Argentaro." Somewhat astonished to hear such words from a man so given to penance, they were at length enlightened as to the Saint's meaning when he explained that God had called Joseph to His service and that they must make a sacrifice of him. And the sacrifice was made with all good will.

The inward gladness and spiritual consolation experienced by the young man on hearing that all the bonds which united him to the world were now snapped, and that he was free to give himself to God, were unbounded. He covered the four miles from Orbetello to Monte Argentaro without knowing that his feet touched the ground; such was his joy and abstraction in God. Fr. Fulgentius, who witnessed his arrival, used to relate that hardly had he reached the church when, prostrate before an image of our Lady, he burst into tears with the fervor of his prayer.

By our holy Founder the postulant was received with great joy, and handed over to Fr. Fulgentius, then Master of Novices, to begin his probation. Needless to say, one who from his childhood had been inclined to solitude and devotion, gave himself over to this kind of life, so rigorous and penitential, with great courage, now

that he was to converse and pass his time with those fervent fathers among whom were our holy Founder, his brother, Fr. John Baptist and Fr. Fulgentius. After some days, on June 11, 1741, Joseph received our holy habit with incredible consolation, in the twenty-first year of his age.

The memoirs do not supply us with many particulars of his novitiate; but the holy life which he afterwards led justify the supposition that he led the same during his first year in the Congregation. The Fathers, at any rate, did not hesitate to admit him to profession. From the beginning of his novitiate, and for many years afterwards, he acted as cook, with charge of domestic matters in general. The method he followed in his daily tasks was not at all ordinary. It was, in fact, generally agreed to be admirable rather than imitable, seeing that he did the work of three persons, laboring, as a rule, more by night than by day. He was very short of stature, nevertheless he went to work with astonishing promptitude and courage, not knowing, apparently, the meaning of fatigue. And yet he never absented himself from any community duty and heard all the masses that were celebrated, without being behindhand in his work. After many years our holy Founder used to take him on the Mission; and we read that on such occasions his presence and his mode of life served as a wonderful sermon. Finally, he was given the responsibility of making the quest, in which office he continued till death with untiring constancy, ever unwearied in the exercise of virtue as will appear from the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER III.

HIS SPIRIT OF PRAYER; AND LOVE OF GOD.

THE reader will already have perceived that Bro. Joseph was one of those privileged souls who, in virtue of the divine gifts with which they are endowed, serve to confound the wisdom of the world and to demonstrate that perfection may be reached even by those whose lives are passed in the humblest employments. We have seen how, as a boy, he was drawn to prayer, recollection and mortification, let us now cite the testimony of his employers in the world that we may learn something more on this subject.

They related that Joseph was given to converse with God to such an extent that express orders were necessary to draw him out of his state of prayer and retirement. So strong was his attraction for the things of heaven, that even in the midst of his house work he seemed engrossed in them. One evening, his mistress, noticing that the sieve with which Joseph was sifting the flour suddenly stopped working, had the curiosity to go and see what was the reason. She found the lad with the sieve in his hands, and his eyes fixed towards heaven. Leaving him thus for a time, she at length called him with a loud voice, saying: "Well, Joseph, what are you doing? Why don't you go on with your work?" Wherefore, waking as from deep sleep, he exclaimed: "Oh, mistress, you have taken me away from the sight of so many beautiful things,"

and then resumed his work with the greatest unconcern.

Joseph himself told Fr. Fulgentius that once, when he was in the church of the Carminé at Naples, during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, he saw a ray of burning light issue from the Sacred Host and direct itself, as a flaming dart, towards his heart. In receiving this wound of love he lost his senses for a time, until, coming to himself, he found that he was alone in the church. From that time, as he confessed, he felt his love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament very sensibly increased. And in fact his employers testified that he would pass whole mornings in the church, hearing and serving Masses and in other exercises of devotion; and when reproved on his return to the house he would humbly and modestly reply: "Don't be disturbed; because all will be ready by dinner time;" as invariably happened to the astonishment of everyone.

As he was seated at table one day after his removal to Orbetello, he suddenly fixed his gaze on a picture of the "Ecce Homo" which hung upon the wall; and as he gazed, he became immovable, as though in ecstasy. Those who sat with him called him by name, but he did not reply, and their wonder was increased on seeing him laugh and then burst into tears. At the end of the meal they surrounded him and shaking him violently, demanded: "What are you about, Joseph, that you do not attend to the serving? What is the meaning of this crying and laughing?" Then the youth, returning to his senses, explained with holy simplicity that the picture of Jesus suf

fering had made him understand the torments of the Passion, and the joy and content which our Lord experienced in the salvation of mankind.

If, while still in the world, Joseph had already made such progress in his communication with God, we may imagine how much he increased it after receiving the habit of religion and surrendering himself entirely to the divine service. Witnesses have left written testimony that he lived in continual abstraction from created things, occupied solely in God. And although he inspired esteem and affection in all who knew him, he, without disregarding conventionalities, never attached himself to anyone. When outside the Retreat, his one aim was to finish what had to be done, that no time might be lost. For the same reason he walked quickly, in silence, with eyes cast down and rosary in hand; and as soon as he had done his duty, he hastened to withdraw once more into solitude and union with God.

His director left it in writing that Brother Joseph's union with God remained unbroken. When giving an account of his spiritual state to the guide of his soul, he was accustomed to say: "My God knows that in all my actions and labors I seek only His glory and the fulfilment of His divine will. My one desire is to love God. I desire to be dissolved with His love like a seraph." And the effects of such desires were visible in his life. "I can say"—these are the words of his director—"that when Brother Joseph came to make his manifestation, he was so absorbed and overcome by the love of God that out of the abundance of his affection, he became dis-

solved in tears and sighs, until he could no longer speak; whence, instead of making his manifestation, he seemed to give vent to the love which was melting his heart.....As soon as he heard anyone speak of Christ he began to weep and seemed scarcely able to get his breath. This happened especially on Fridays, when he devoted himself entirely to the contemplation of our Lord's sufferings."

Similar effects were noticed when the greatness and mercy of the Mother of God were mentioned in his hearing. Brother Ubaldus, his inseparable companion, used to relate that once, as they walked together through a town, they met a procession in honor of our Lady. And when they entered the church, Brother Joseph, having begun to pray, was rapt in ecstasy for a good space of time, much to the surprise of the beholders. Another time, walking with one of our priests, he wished to hear from him something about the Blessed Virgin; but in the midst of the discourse he burst into sighs and tears which stopped his progress; and before they could proceed the priest had to shake him.



CHAPTER IV.

THE SAME.

WHAT we have hitherto said goes to demonstrate what a high degree of prayer and union with God Brother Joseph had attained. It

may be said, without fear of exaggeration, that just as he exercised his body in assiduous labors, so in spirit he remained ever united to God. This fact was evident in his very appearance, which was always recollected, modest, silent and devout. Not content with the hours allotted by our Rule to prayer, he availed himself of every possible moment of spare time to add to them, not only when he was at home, but also outside the Retreat. He had always a great devotion for hearing Mass, which he did on every possible occasion; and if he could not remain to the end he contented himself with a fervent visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

For this Heavenly Bread his hunger was so extreme, that if he happened to be away from the Retreat on one of the days when Holy Communion is prescribed by the Rule, and he had been unable to receive It in the morning, he would hasten his steps so as to arrive at some village where he might be able to approach the Holy Table before mid-day. It was related by Fr. Fulgentius, for many years his superior and spiritual director, that one morning, when the holy brother served his Mass, the latter was so carried away by his desire to receive the Blessed Sacrament that he seemed to be overcome by a holy langor. At the moment of the priest's communion, the brother felt the sacred particle placed on his tongue by an invisible hand, with abundance of sweetness and spiritual favors.

With such dispositions no wonder if this blessed Brother seemed always abstracted and taken out of his senses on the smallest occasion !

His heart seemed to consist of some very subtle material; and it required very little provocation to set it on fire, and for the love of God to master it completely. Once, when on a visit to the Holy House of Loretto, as he entered the sanctuary and reflected on the great mysteries which had been enacted there, he was so far taken out of himself that he scarcely seemed to breathe: and at last, when compelled by his companion to come to his senses, he began to wander about the church without seeming to know where he went; and when asked by his companion what he was doing, he humbly replied: "I feel as though I were out of myself." It happened more than once that when he approached the stove in the kitchen he trod on the hot coals without knowing it. As he wore no sandals, his feet were horribly burned; but the good brother appeared not to pay any attention to it, so absorbed was he in heavenly meditation. The same thing happened one night while the bread was being made. His companion said to him: "Brother, there is something burning, don't you smell it?" To which he replied: "I don't perceive it." But a brief search convinced both that he was standing with his bare feet on burning coals.

More wonderful still is the following fact, by which was manifested the divine ardor which consumed his heart. He was once very seriously ill at Monte Argentaro, and his life was despaired of. The Brother was assisted by the religious in turn and among the rest by our holy Founder himself. One evening he was rapt out of his senses, and, as he related afterwards, he saw

himself spiritually clad in a habit of the finest gold: and at the same time he was shown another garment, also of gold and richly embroidered, with which it was made known to him that he should be clothed after his cure. Then he felt his heart inflamed in an extraordinary manner, while with the little breath which remained to him, he called out: "Love, love, oh holy love!" The edification of the religious who heard this may be well imagined. Nor was this the passing dream of a moment. It lasted until the next morning, the Brother making the same exclamation all the time, and returning no other answer to any question that was put to him.

Our holy Founder questioning him, said: "Well, Brother Joseph, what do you think now of virtue, of humility, of poverty?" To which the good Brother answered: "They are the bellows of love." "And what do you think of silence?" "It is the key of love's treasures." And when it was day, our holy Founder said: "Well, now, I will go and celebrate holy Mass." As soon as he heard the word "Mass" everyone noticed his face kindle as though he were a seraph; it seemed as though he were on fire and wished to be dissolved so that he might fly to his heavenly Beloved. But his time was not arrived. The religious who desired his recovery for the sake of the Congregation prayed fervently, and our Lord was pleased to hear them through the intercession of St. Joseph, whose relics, applied to the sick man, appeared to cure him perfectly. He afterwards confided to our holy Founder that after this illness he felt himself completely

changed, and like one re-born to a new life, both bodily and spiritually.



CHAPTER V.

HIS SPIRIT OF PENANCE AND ABNEGATION.

IT would be a mistake to suppose that Brother Joseph's spiritual life was confined to the enjoyment of the heavenly favors just mentioned, because if on the one hand God was generous with His gifts, His servant, on the other, showed himself faithful and generous in the practise of every virtue. We read, in fact, that the life of this good Brother was one continual sacrifice and martyrdom of himself, and that his penance and mortification were admirable though quite beyond imitation. He used every artifice to add to the penances practised by the religious in common. For example, his ordinary food consisted of the leavings sent from the refectory into the kitchen; these he would mix together and leave for some days until they began to putrefy, when he would eat a small quantity, just sufficient to sustain life. This was, indeed, his sole object in eating—to keep body and soul together; for he confessed to having lost all taste for food, and that when he ate, it was like throwing so much food into a sack. And, as we have seen, his abstraction was so great, that sometimes while he ate he would

burst into tears as he pondered in his mind the divine mysteries.

As to his work, although he was short of stature and not of a very strong constitution, his activity knew neither limit nor measure; and he only allowed himself a short rest when he found it absolutely necessary. He went very often to the village of S. Stefano, below, to beg for fish; but although the distance was not less than six miles and he used to return to the Retreat greatly fatigued in consequence, he would at once set about cooking the fish for the community: and if the hour were very late, he would snatch some brief repose in the stable that he might avoid waking the religious. And if sometimes he had to start out early, not on this account would he anticipate the hour of going to bed. On the contrary he would work all the later in the kitchen that he might have the most necessary things ready for the morning; and if he had to make the bread, he would work at it till midnight in order to get it finished. The sack of straw which served him for a couch, was always in motion, because it was understood to be at the disposal of any stranger who might arrive, and for whom no other bed could be found. In this case Brother Joseph would sleep on the bare ground without coverings, of which, as a matter of fact, he had little use, for it was his custom to pass the greater part of the night in prayer. It was much the same when he had occasion to travel. He made no account of cold or hot weather, of want of food or lodging. Everything was indifferent to him. His powers of adaptation were as un-

limited as his patience and courage.

His great desire was to suffer, and he left no stone unturned, whether in the Retreat or outside, to satisfy this perpetual longing. He used to tell how, being once at S. Stefano on Christmas day with Fr. Fulgentius, they both slept in the house of some benefactor; but as he lay in bed, it came into his mind to compare his soft couch with the manger in which Christ had reposed, whereupon he prayed our Lord to change the comfort of his bed into pain; and his prayer was immediately answered, for from that moment he seemed to lie on a heap of sharp stones, which caused him to pass the night in continual torture, in the midst of which he gave vent to his pitying love for the Word made Flesh.

Not inferior to his love of suffering was his anxiety to mortify his passions. He was dead and crucified to the world and to himself. The sole motive of all his actions was the will and pleasure of Almighty God. His superiors might do with him what they pleased; never did he object, much less think himself aggrieved or overworked. No complaint ever escaped him; never did he ask for any exemption or for a moment's respite. His readiness for duty, notwithstanding his love of retirement and recollection, was constantly the object of admiration among his brethren. He very often took his turn, as porter, at answering the bell; and so prompt was he in discharging this office, that if the bell happened to ring as he knelt at the altar ready to receive Holy Communion with the rest, he would run to answer the summons at once, leaving his Communion to

a later hour. He loved to obey not only those in authority, but his equals and inferiors. On one occasion, another lay-brother, his junior in the Congregation, suggested that they should change places, and Brother Joseph at once consented. Another time, as they were both standing near the oven, the same brother bade him jump into it. Without a moment's hesitation, Brother Joseph leapt up and stood on the edge of the flames, without receiving any harm.

Always ready to sacrifice his life for the love of God, he was called upon, some years later, to do so, when at the season for making the quest he was sent into the Tuscan "Maremma." Although he foresaw what the result would be, he raised no objection, out of homage to the holy will of God, as will be seen later.



CHAPTER VI.

HIS HUMILITY AND PATIENCE.

IT is quite unnecessary to investigate the fact of Brother Joseph's humility or to enquire into the very poor opinion which he had of himself. Without humility he never could have reached the high degree he attained in the love of God and in the other virtues of which it is the inseparable foundation.

It will be more to the purpose to give some examples of the manner in which he received

such humiliations as were put in his way. Even in a community composed of saints, occasions for the exercise of humility were sufficiently numerous, especially in those difficult times of beginning; and like others, Brother Joseph came in for his share of mortification, contradiction and criticism. It was his custom, on such occasions, to answer nothing; and if sometimes an uncharitable word escaped him, it was scarcely spoken before he was down on his knees in the act of asking pardon.

Very edifying was his silence, when his superiors, to safeguard him against pride, publicly mortified him and treated him as a hypocrite, above all when he was surprised by that impetus of divine love which found vent in floods of tears. On such occasions he would prostrate himself and so regain his composure, with apparently as little concern as though he had received some welcome gift. Other opportunities for humiliation would occur even outside the Retreat. Among other instances we read that a certain Tuscan bishop begged Brother Joseph to give him some roots of cane, and send them to the house of some family in the neighborhood. The servant of God did so with all care; but the family having heard that the bishop was dead, thought no more of the matter. Shortly afterwards the brother went to the bishop's house again where he received from the prelate a severe reproof, as though he had been too careless to keep his word; upon which he simply went on his knees and preserved an absolute silence. He followed the same line of conduct with an officer in Orbetello who meeting him

one day, without any apparent motive, reproved him sharply.

A young girl in Tuscany, writing to her intended husband, told him that her parents had been persuaded by Brother Joseph to refuse their consent to the proposed match, which was absolutely false. It happened that not long afterwards the servant of God went to beg at the house of the young man who insulted him and struck him in the face. His companion, seeing him come down from the house red with the blow, was astonished to hear him repeat gently: "One must take evil for good."

But, in order to satisfy the good brother's desire for suffering and humiliation, it pleased our Lord to treat him as He is wont to treat the souls dearest to Him, namely, to allow him to experience inward desolations and spiritual abandonment, together with vehement temptations from the evil one. On all these occasions the servant of God gave fresh proof of the fine temper of his virtue, never diminishing for one moment his fervor in the divine service.

These temptations for the most part took the shape of melancholy, or incitements to anger and impurity; and very often they were accompanied by frightful apparitions or terrible fears, especially when the brother was about to pray or to dispose himself to sleep. One night, as he slept in an inn, known as "*La Marsigliana*," in a room where several seculars were also lodged, the fear of the latter at the noise made by the devil was so great that they all fled. Another time, in Cellere, his companion could not sleep for the noise, for it

seemed to him that the house was falling. In the morning, the servant of God on being asked if he had heard anything, replied: "That ugly beast—his name for the devil—has given me no peace this night." One day, as he was performing some duty in the Retreat, he had occasion to go up a ladder. While he was ascending, the devil overthrew the ladder, and made it fall with Brother Joseph to the ground. But the servant of God, invoking the name of holy Mary, remained safe and sound.

More terrible was the event which happened on the night of September 3, 1752. The religious were all asleep, and Brother Joseph, in his cell, recited prayers in honor of his patron saint; when the devil appeared to him in a frightful guise and taking him by the throat threatened to strangle him unless he desisted from his prayers; and afterwards, seizing him by the girdle, he began to raise him in the air. At the noise, the brother who shared his cell awoke, and ran to his assistance, but the devil took hold of both the brothers, and bounding hither and thither with them raised a terrible din, which aroused all the religious. Fr. Fulgentius, the superior, being arrived at the spot, and seeing very soon what was the matter, put his hand on Brother Joseph as though to defend him. Whereupon the devil threw both the brothers down a staircase. The fright, as may be imagined, was terrible in the midst of the perfect darkness which prevailed. But the servant of God had the courage to ask for his crucifix and summoned the demon to desist; while Fr. Fulgentius, armed with the relic of St. Joseph, did the

same, untill the evil one abandoned his hold. But the fear and horror engendered by this scene lasted for a long time. Fr. Fulgentius suffered for some space after it with a kind of paralysis. and Brother Joseph himself was seen next day with his hair standing erect. Terrible as the combat was, more glorious was the good brother's victory and the abundance of merit he acquired by it for life eternal.



CHAPTER VII.

HIS DEATH. SUBSEQUENT PRODIGES.

BROTHER Joseph had now reached the age of forty-eight years, much enfeebled in health, owing to his unremitting labors and penances, to say nothing of the all-devouring fire of divine love which consumed him. It seems that God must have given him some interior manifestation that before long He would call him to Himself. The time had arrived for him to set out on the usual quest; and although, as a rule, he needed no reminding, on this occasion, as though aware that he would no more return to his beloved Retreat, he seemed to be unable to leave it. Before deciding on his departure, he must put his cell in good order and arrange everything that concerned his duty; and even then he delayed, until his companion began to think that to save time he had better start without him. At length the superior

called him and told him not to delay further, and the good brother replied that he would set out at once; but to more than one he confided that he was about to sacrifice his life to holy obedience.

And in fact he was surprised on his journey by a fever of so violent a character that he was hardly able to reach Giuncarico, in the province of Grosseto, where he found a bed in the house of a benefactor. So quickly had the malady overcome him that there was no time to call a religious from one of our Retreats to console him. He therefore received the last Sacraments from the parish priest, and having disposed himself with extraordinary fervor, passed to a better life on April 21st, 1768.

When the body was exposed in the church, so happy was the look on the face of the brother that the beholders were filled with joy and consolation. After the funeral services, the remains were provisionally buried in the parish church; but after the lapse of three months they were transferred to the church of the Novitiate on Monte Argentaro, for the construction of which Brother Joseph had begged and labored so much.

On the occasion of the exhumation, the body was found to be discolored in every part save the left shoulder, on which his skin and flesh were intact, in their original colors. In this everyone saw a manifestation of the divine pleasure in the fatigues sustained by the holy Brother in that part of his body which he had often loaded with heavy weights when he worked or went on the quest. But God was pleased to give other tokens of His predilection both during Brother Joseph's

life and after his death, of which we will mention a few instances here.

One of our benefactors in Orbetello, Signor Petri, was sick unto death, when one of our religious mentioned the fact to Brother Joseph who no sooner heard of it than he ran to the church of St. Blaise, where he remained for some time in fervent prayer. He then went to visit the sick man and he said to him: "Signor Petri, do not fear; you will be cured." And so it happened. The prayers of Brother Joseph also obtained for Signora Giovanna Maria Grazi, a great benefactress of the Congregation, a similar prolongation of earthly existence. The Brother himself simply said to his fellow religious: "Signora Grazi would have died, but the Blessed Virgin has obtained for her the grace to live a little longer."

One year, the good Brother, much impressed by the charity he received from the fishermen of S. Stefano, made special prayers to God that their labors might be fruitful in results; and they made enormous hauls in consequence. Once also as he was coasting along the island of Elba, he encountered a huge shoal of tunny fish. He, immediately thinking of his benefactors, called out to the fish to go to the nets. And the creatures, as though in obedience to an irresistible command, made their way thither without more ado, and were all taken. But let these few facts suffice as examples of Brother Joseph's powerful intercession during his life. We will now add some of the favors received after his death, and duly recorded in the memoirs.

Lorenzo Borraccia, a poor inhabitant of

Magliano, in the diocese of Soana, was near death owing to hemorrhage which had lasted for three days. Every remedy was tried in vain, until at last a piece of the habit worn by Brother Joseph was placed upon him and he recovered. Cecilia Bruno, of Rocca Albegna, suffered constantly with ulcers in her mouth, and after three years she could hardly drink water. She was induced, however, to swallow a piece of Brother Joseph's habit, upon which she began to improve, and in a short time was completely cured. A certain Artemisia, of Panicale, was troubled with a tumor on her knee, which, it was said, could only be cured by an operation. Recourse was had to Brother Joseph, and a "scaldino" which he had used having been applied, with prayer, to the afflicted part, the tumor immediately disappeared.

We will conclude this brief notice of Brother Joseph by recalling the fact of our holy Founder's esteem for him. When he heard of his death the Saint wept much, and wrote to the Rector of Monte Argentaro as follows: "*Sicut Domino placuit, ita fuctum est. Sit nomen Domini benedictum.* I have felt and still feel keenly the loss which Brother Joseph's death entails upon us, and I could not do less than pay him the tribute of my poor tears, with total abandonment to the divine will; and I have thanked the Divine Goodness who has received him into the bosom of His mercies, which we will praise in heaven, as I hope, for all eternity. Although we have lost him in this world, we shall possess him as a great advocate in heaven. *Itaque consolemur invicem in verbis istis.*"



Brother James of St. Louis.

CHAPTER I.

HIS LIFE IN THE WORLD.

WE will close these memoirs with some notice of another lay-brother who bore his part in the establishment of our Congregation, and was illustrious by his virtuous example. As in the case of Fr. John Baptist, brother of our holy Founder, the life of Brother James of St. Louis has been already printed; but there seems no reason, on this account, why it should be omitted here, where its inclusion serves to complete the purpose of this book, namely, to make known to the reader the principal companions and disciples of St. Paul of the Cross.

Brother James was a native of Finizzone, in the canton of the Grigioni in Switzerland. He was born on March 3, 1714, and his parents, Daniel and Anna Maria Durbant, were fervent upholders of the Catholic religion. Little or nothing is known of his childhood, though it is generally understood that he was pious and devout, frequenting the churches and approaching the Sac-

raments of Confession and Communion three times a week.

With these excellent dispositions he reached the age when it is proper to choose a state in life. Owing to the severity of the climate and the scarcity of vegetation in that part of Switzerland, emigration was not uncommon; and James, following the example of many others, went, with the consent of his parents, to Rome, in search of employment.

Here he met with a gentleman who took him into his service. James found his master very careful in the matter of Christian virtue, a man who followed the devout life and expected his servants to do the same. Very readily did James follow this excellent example and soon became known in the household for his modest and reserved conduct, and for his fervor in pious practices. To help him in his holy desires he made use of the Oratory founded in Rome by Father Caravita, who gathered artists and persons who followed various employments to hear the word of God, to frequent the Sacraments and practise works of charity towards their neighbor. Greatly rejoiced was James to become a member of this Oratory, following its exercises with much fruit to his soul.

Having remained four years with his devout employer, James returned to his own country without having yet decided on a state of life. His fellow townsmen, however, noticed his extraordinary advance in virtue. Once more amongst them, he entered upon a very retired life, devoting to prayer every moment he could snatch from

his duties. It is related that in order to repair the scandal he had given before going to Rome, by playing the violin at country gatherings, he used to beat his fingers with rods and stones. He was accustomed to do all he could to warn others against idleness, and to spend himself in the service of the poor, from whose farms he used to drive the beasts which broke in and damaged the crops.

In short he gave unmistakable signs of a call to perfection, and determined at length to return to Rome that he might dedicate himself to God in some religious house. At first he met with some opposition from his brothers, who, however, at last gave their consent and left James free to follow the inspiration which was leading him back to the holy city.



CHAPTER II.

HIS VOCATION AND NOVITIATE.

THE year 1740 had already begun when James arrived in Rome for the second time. Although he had come with a set purpose in his mind, he judged it prudent to go into service again while he was arranging to be received into some religious house. Inclined as he was to austerity, he chose the Friar Minors of St. Francis as one of the most severely penitential Orders; and after waiting some months, he received a favorable reply to his application, and entered that Order as a novice. But God called him elsewhere. From a letter of his, written to his brother, a par-

ish priest, in the October of that year, (1740), it appears that after two attempts he was sent away by the superiors because he was unable to remain kneeling during the long period prescribed by their rule.

The humble young man, recognizing in this fact the will of Divine Providence, concluded that he had no real vocation to the religious state, and determined therefore to remain in the world. God's ways, however, are inscrutable, and many times they are made clear to us, contrary to all expectation. Two years had passed in uncertainty and obscurity, when one day James heard that two men had arrived in Rome from Lombardy in order to obtain Pope Benedict XIV's approval for a new Institute, called the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and that they had already founded a house on the confines of Tuscany near the city of Orbetello.

This news re-awakened James' desire to leave the world that he might consecrate himself entirely to God; and so strongly did he feel its impulse that he started at once for this new foundation, to try if at least this time his ardent wishes might meet with fulfilment. It is not known whether our holy Founder was at the Retreat, but it is certain that James, presenting himself to the superiors, humbly asked to be received into the Congregation, all unworthy as he was, begging them to have pity on his soul, and to make him the beast of burden of the Retreat. His simple and humble mode of address made a favorable impression, and he was received without delay to make the usual trial of his vocation.

He was then twenty-eight years of age, but notwithstanding the many tests which he had to undergo, he remained firm in his purpose, and was at length clothed in the habit of the Congregation on the 18th of December, 1742.

With what fervor he began and continued in his novitiate, we may learn from the pen of Fr. Fulgentius, his novice master, who has left us an account of it. From the first day when Brother James entered the novitiate, he writes, his excellent dispositions for running in the way of perfection were made evident. From the very beginning he renounced himself and placed himself as one dead in the hands of his director and master, never omitting to carry out one iota of the instructions he received. He was much inclined to penance and mortification; nevertheless having heard from his Master that he must do nothing without the blessing of obedience, and that he must give his chief attention to observing the holy Rules, by means of which he would arrive at the highest holiness, he formed upon these lines a plan of conduct so fervent as to astonish those who were most experienced in the spiritual life. Entirely occupied by his desire to reach the very perfection of observance, he began to study the little book of the Rules with the greatest attention. after which he took it up again and meditated upon each separate part of it; so abundantly did he draw from it material for the practise of virtue, that his Master did not hesitate to assert that of all the novices of that year none equalled Brother James.

Nor did his fidelity consist merely in exterior

conformity with the Rules. No, says the Master, he soon understood the object to which all observance is directed, namely, the acquisition of those solid virtues which tend to the reform of the spirit; and to this object he directed his efforts with such assiduity that in a few months he cleansed his heart and entirely reformed his lower appetites.

Such, continues Fr. Fulgentius, was the fire which consumed him from within that he was not content with the ordinary attainments, but strove for the perfection of virtue. It seemed as though God had given him a particular light whereby he was able to understand the different virtues and to discern what was most perfect, so that I was astonished. Indeed, when, as on many occasions, I was questioned by him I found myself in a labyrinth in my efforts to answer; and although I had read many ascetical books and had much experience in the direction of novices, I confess that I knew not what to reply, or how to say anything much to the purpose.

From what has been said it will be readily understood that the superiors of the Congregation soon found that in Brother James they had made a rare acquisition. Such was the opinion of our holy Founder, who obtained from the Holy See a dispensation to anticipate his profession: whereupon the fervent novice pronounced his vows, to his great satisfaction, and that of the community.



CHAPTER III.

HIS EXACTITUDE IN OBSERVING THE RULES

WE have seen how Brother James determined, by means of a strict observance of the Rules, to make himself a saint. Let us now give some examples of the manner he adopted to accomplish his purpose. Our Rules prescribe that the signals which called to community duties should be obeyed with promptitude. Of Brother James it may be said that he flew at such summons; his punctuality far outstripping that of any other member of the community. At the first sound of the rattle for matins he was already out of his cell, as though he had been up, waiting for the signal. Wonderful, too, was his observance of the rule of silence, which forbids us to speak except in times of recreation, unless for real necessity and then only in a low voice. Now it happened that some public official who represented the king of Naples et Port Ercole, came to make the spiritual exercises in our Retreat of the Presentation, and Brother James was appointed to attend to his wants. He had therefore occasion to go several times a day to the room of this gentleman who used to question him about various matters, though he never could prevail upon the Brother to answer, except with a word or two sufficient for bare civility. The official, however, was not in the least offended; on the contrary, he was much edified when the Brother explained to him one day at recreation the reason of his silence.

Brother James' obedience was, if possible, still more remarkable. He seemed to have no will or judgment, so ready was he in all matters to subject himself to the opinion of others. In his superiors he recognized the person of God Himself and it was enough for him to know their wishes in order to execute them. Fr. Fulgentius, on this subject, wrote: "I was greatly edified, and at the same time filled with confusion to see how, out of a single act, he would make a chain of the most sublime virtues. If he obeyed, he did so with the thought that he was an ass whose duty it was to be subject to all, and who ought to recognize a superior in everyone, being himself the vilest creature on earth; because he wished to exercise that act of submission, of charity, of promptitude towards another for the love of God; and because it was God's will and pleasure; after the example of his Crucified Lord who for our sakes made Himself obedient unto death. Similar were his sentiments in the performance of the very smallest act of obedience, renewing the same intentions even in matters of indifference, in every act of observance, in every step he took; which things when laid before me in spiritual conference, were matters rather for my instruction than for his, not a little to my own confusion."

But let us cite one or two instances which will better serve to illustrate the height of perfection which this good Brother had attained in the practise of obedience. Once, when he was a member of the community of S. Maria del Cerro he accused himself of his faults in the refectory, as is customary amongst us, and then, prostrate

with his face to the ground, waited to receive a penance from the superior. Now, either because he did not hear the superior, or because the latter forgot, the Brother remained in that position during the whole of the repast. Nor was the fact noticed by the superior in the act of leaving the refectory; he became aware of Brother James' absence only at the end of recreation, when the good religious was found still extended on the pavement of the refectory.

Father Dominic of the Immaculate Conception, Rector of the same Retreat, has left it in writing that a violent wind blew all the fruit from two apricot trees in the enclosure in the course of a single night. Noticing the fact in the early morning, and thinking the passers-by might help themselves, the Rector, before saying Mass, called Brother James to him, and told him to go and gather the fruit. The Brother, who was then preparing to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion, immediately obeyed, and towards the middle of the morning presented himself at the Rector's cell to tell him that his order had been carried out. The superior, to find out whether Brother James had been displeased, said to him: "Tell me, Brother, how many complaints you have made against me this morning. Perhaps you said; 'This Rector thinks more of the apricots than of a poor Brother's Communion.'" To which Brother James replied: "No, Father Rector, I have not said any such thing; but I tell you now that if I had gone to Communion, I might have made three or four acts of the love of God; whereas, by obeying you, I have made two bas-

kets of them." "How?" asked the Rector; and the Brother answered: "When I reached the foot of the trees and saw how many apricots were fallen, before gathering them I said, — 'O my Jesus, I intend to make as many acts of love towards Thee as there are apricots on the ground;' I have gathered two baskets full, and so I have made two baskets of acts of the love of God." Hearing this, the Rector said: "Now that you have made such a good preparation, go and receive Holy Communion." And so he did.

Such were the maxims which ruled this good Brother in spiritual things. The first reason of his every act was the will of God, and this will of God he recognized above all in holy obedience. Once placed in any position of responsibility, his only thought was how best he could do his duty in it. Things are related of him which would savor of exaggeration except for the fact that in doing them he was impressed with the idea, before all things, that he was fulfilling the will of God. The same Father Rector related in writing that on one occasion Brother James was about to receive Holy Communion when he heard the bell ring which it was his duty to answer. He at once ran to the door leaving his Communion to a later Mass. The same thing happened once when he was at Confession, and he would have run to answer the bell if his confessor had not prevented him. And the memoirs say that these instances might be multiplied but for the fact that our first religious were accustomed to suppress them as much as possible.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS PATIENCE AND HUMILITY.

IT will be easily understood that Brother James, in his pursuit of perfection, saw not only the importance of making war on his will and judgment, but the necessity of keeping the lower appetites under complete control. The memoirs furnish us with several instances of the constant watch which he kept upon himself of which we will cite a few.

Owing to the scarcity of subjects in the early days of our Institute, it was sometimes necessary to employ a single religious in various offices. But Brother James never showed the least sign of discontent or of thinking himself overworked. In the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro he had the care of the door, the refectory and the kitchen for two years, and he always fulfilled these manifold duties with admirable promptitude. In those days, also, when the poverty of the Congregation was extreme, necessaries were often wanting. But Brother James made light of all such difficulties, and would even then find means to despoil himself of something. Whenever he could, he would take his meals after the others had finished, eating what they left, or using the remains of the food of yesterday.

And so in the matter of clothing, he would choose the worst and the most worn. He could never be induced to wear a new tunic longer than three months, and he never would have put a new

one on unless forced by obedience. As soon as he noticed that any of his companions had a garment in a worse condition than his own, he made haste to effect an exchange, importuning the superior for his permission until at last he obtained consent. He was never so content as when he could appear in an old, patched habit, mended often with white thread. And if he thus earned the contempt of others, so much the better was he pleased.

It would be too long to recount the artifices which he used to get himself employed in the most menial duties, and to procure himself all sorts of humiliations. From his lips never issued the smallest complaint; or any indication that he was wounded by the poor opinion others might have formed of him. He spoke to all with ineffable charm; he spoke well of all, thinking everyone better than himself. If sometimes he spoke of himself it would be by some such epithet as "disgusting carrion," an "ass good for nothing," and this he said with sincere conviction, expressing his satisfaction with a serene and smiling countenance, when he found that he had been taken at his word.

And this disposition was still more edifying when he had been guilty of some defect, or when he had received some reproof. Whoever it was that blamed him, Brother James was instantly down on his knees with all modesty and humility. As a rule, he answered nothing; or if he opened his lips to say anything, it was: "Yes, Brother, I did wrong: forgive me; I am an ass, good for nothing." In the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro it

was once his duty to give food to some workmen engaged on repairs, and these men used to find fault with him because the dishes were not to their liking. The servant of God's only reply was to go on his knees and ask pardon, because he could not otherwise content them.

When it was a case of receiving reproof from superiors, Brother James' virtue was resplendent indeed. Such reproof was given merely to try him, and was accepted in the same spirit. The good Brother, instead of thinking himself aggrieved, made it an occasion of joy, and the more he was made to appear in the light of a negligent and careless religious, the greater was his satisfaction. Moreover, such was his desire to be considered a culpable person, that if he saw any instance of negligence in the house, he would go and accuse himself of it, much to the astonishment of the community.



CHAPTER V.

HIS RECOLLECTION AND PRAYER.

BROTHER James' desires after perfection had their origin in the fact that he was a man of prayer. He was truly admirable, writes Fr. Fulgentius, in his manner of offering even the least of his actions to God.....With this pure intention he gilded everything he undertook, performing it with holy affections, with loving ejaculations, addressed to the Most Holy Mary, or to Jesus

Crucified, or to his patron saints; so that he may be said to have been always in prayer. It must not be supposed, however, that in this way he sought to withdraw himself from work, on the contrary, he was unwearied, never giving himself rest, never refusing help where he could bestow it. His secret consisted in having formed for himself a kind of inward oratory, where, always recollected and united with God, he never lost sight of Him, although occupied in external labors or afflicted with inward trials. For it is not to be imagined that our Lord's dealings with Brother James always took the shape of spiritual sweetness. On the contrary, he was frequently visited by dryness, desolation and other afflictions. At the same time, his interior peace was never really disturbed. No one ever detected in him the slightest sign of disturbance; he seemed always in the same humor, always tranquil, with a modest and serene bearing, so that, as Fr. Fulgentius writes, the mere sight of him moved one to devotion, as at the sight of an angel in human form.

His presence sufficed to attract the attention and admiration of all beholders. It happened that one day when a mission was being given by our religious at Port S. Stefano, Brother James listened to the sermon from the window of the house of one of our benefactors. Now many among the audience, instead of attending to the preacher, fixed their eyes on the good Brother. When the sermon was over, these persons asked Fr. Fulgentius who that religious was whom they had seen at the window, confessing that by beholding him there in that devout attitude with his

eyes cast down they had been more impressed than by the words of the preacher. It was the same in the Retreat itself, where the religious never failed to be edified by the modesty and recollection of the servant of God. On one occasion the Brother excited the wonder of the Fr. Rector who heard him say that he did not know by sight the Vicar General of Toscanella, with whom, at the same time, he was on friendly terms, for this priest often came to the Retreat to confer with him on spiritual matters. None of Brother James' moments were ever idle or given to 'useless conversation. He always carried with him a small copy of the "Following of Christ," and every now and then, in the intervals of his work, he would bring it out and read some passage from which he would draw many beautiful considerations for the nourishment and strengthening of his spirit. So also he frequently visited the Blessed Sacrament to vent his affection for our Lord. Or he would turn to the Blessed Virgin, for whom his love was more than filial. He used to wear a small iron chain on his right foot to symbolize his content to be the slave and servant of this most august Queen.

Most wonderful of all was it to see him at prayer. When he assisted in choir at the divine office, which he never failed to do at Matins, he would remain standing upright all the time. On other occasions, he would kneel; but whatever his attitude, he never leaned against anything, or changed his position, but remained immovable as a statue: clearly showing that he was possessed by the sense of God's presence, and deep in medi-

tation on the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in fact our Fathers attested that it was an enchantment to hear Brother James' conferences; to listen to him as he discoursed with holy ideas of God, interpreting the mysteries of our Lord's Passion, expressing his desire to unite himself to Jesus and to imitate His example.

Let us conclude this chapter with a further quotation from Fr. Fulgentius, who wrote: "To describe in detail the virtues of this Brother is no easy undertaking. What I can say in a few words amounts to this, that in him I have always recognized a virtue truly great and singular, which cannot be explained in a few sentences. Let anyone conceive, if he can, the perfection of one whose sole ambition is to reach the highest sanctity, and then let him hold it for certain that such a one is the prototype of Brother James."



CHAPTER VI.

HIS DEATH. SUBSEQUENT PRODIGES.

THE servant of God had lived for two years in the Retreat of S. Maria del Cerro near Toscanella, when, about the end of July, 1750. he began to feel the bad effects of the unhealthy climate. Medical aid being useless, his superiors decided to try change of air; and for this purpose they sent him to Cellere, a district of the diocese of Acquapendente, where Signor Falandi, a bene-

factor of the Congregation, received the invalid into his house with great kindness. Brother James arrived early in August, and two doctors of the place were soon in attendance, but although they applied every possible remedy, the malady made such rapid progress that the sick man was soon at death's door.

Signor Falandi's household were much edified to see that their guest, notwithstanding the severity of his illness, was firm in the practise of every virtue. Obedient as he always had been, so he maintained himself till his last breath. In the short space of time that remained to him, attested the priest Don Filippo, brother of Signor Falandi, he ne never presumed to ask for anything, nor on the other hand did he refuse any refreshment that was offered him, taking everything with the greatest humility and docility. His modesty, especially in his looks, was continual. Until the last day, he obeyed the rule which prescribes the recitation of five Paters and Aves in fulfilment of our Fourth Vow, and every moment he spent alone was passed in prayer. But the Brother did not flatter himself that he would outlive this illness, and after having received the last Sacraments at his own request, he prepared himself for his last moments.

The eventful fourteenth of August was not long in coming. It seemed as though the Blessed Virgin, to whom Brother James had always been most devout, had obtained for him the grace of passing to the other life on the day of her Assumption into heaven. It is the custom in Cellere to carry the statue of the Mother of God in proces-

sion after the first Vespers of the feast. Now it happened that as the procession passed the house where Brother James lay sick, he became suddenly weaker, and gave no uncertain signs of his approaching end; and when the procession reached the house a second time, he began to enter on his agony. Don Filippo Falandi, who was assisting him, noticing that at this moment the sick man moved his lips, approached him, to catch if possible what he was saying, but could understand nothing. Finally the procession entered the church where the function concluded with the Litany of Loretto. It was the hour of the Ave Maria, and as the bell sounded, Brother James closed his eyes to this world to open them to the light of eternity, as though invited by his Blessed Mother to participate in the festival which was then beginning in heaven in memory of her triumph.

“Oh,” exclaims Fr. Fulgentius, in relating the death of his disciple, “how I envy the lot of our Brother, who, as he left the prison of this world, deserved to behold the triumphs and the glories of our dear Mother Mary ! How fortunate to go and celebrate in heaven the solemn anniversary of the glorious entry of the Queen of Angels into the heavenly Sion. How fortunate to behold Mary Most Holy exalted above the angelic choirs, crowned empress of heaven and earth, declared Treasurer and Dispenser of the divine favors. But I am not surprised that he was thus privileged, because it is natural for a mother to share her joy with her beloved children: and thus our Brother, being a true child of Mary

whom he had chosen for his Mother, was made worthy to share her greatness on his own entrance into Paradise." So far this man of God.

The news of Brother James' death spread through the district like a flash, and the commotion was indescribable. Already the servant of God had been esteemed by all; but his fame had been greatly increased by the humility and recollection with which he had received the last Sacraments and by the angelic appearance of his dead body. From the first a claim was made by the people for the possession of his remains, it being urged that as God had disposed that he should die in Cellere, there he ought to be buried. On the other hand, Don Filippo Falandi possessed a letter written by the Rector of our Retreat at Toscanella in which it was directed that if Brother James should die in Cellere, his remains were to be taken to the Retreat. To end the embarrassment, Don Filippo dispatched a messenger to the bishop to know his decision. But as the bishop was not in Acquapendente, the messenger had to follow him to Piano, where he was obliged to wait so long that he could not return to Cellere until a late hour on the morrow. Owing to this delay, the twenty-four hours allowed by the law for the body to remain in the house had already elapsed; whence it was necessary, as an expedient, to hand the body over to the parish priest, but, by way of deposit, with the obligation of restoring it should the General of the Passionists so require.

And so everything was arranged for the transfer of the body which was placed, according to what was supposed to be the usage of the Passion-

ists, upon a bier, clothed in the religious habit with the head sprinkled with ashes and crowned with thorns. Then the bell was tolled, at the sound of which a great crowd filled the streets and the house of the Falandi family. It was noticed that only one house in the district remained open. Now, while the confraternities and the clergy were being put in the order of procession, the Almighty willed to demonstrate by a stupendous prodigy the greatness of the soul of His servant. This prodigy took the shape of an arch of shining and beautiful light which stretched from Monte Argentaro, where Brother James had made his novitiate and profession, to the Retreat near Toscanella, in which he had passed the last years of his life.

Then was fuel added to the flame of popular enthusiasm and devotion towards the relics of the holy Brother, to whom heaven itself seemed to be paying its tribute of honor. The house of the Falandi family was besieged by those who wished to see the body and to touch it with their rosaries and other pious objects, until the authorities were obliged to intervene, to enable the procession to start on its way to the church. Everything possible was done to add to the solemnity of the occasion, and it was said that Cellere had never before seen anything approaching the splendor of the display. After the funeral service, the body was laid to rest in the grave of the Mazzarigi family, pending the decision of the authorities. In the end, however, the General of the Congregation, our holy Founder himself, thought it bet-

ter to take no steps and so to satisfy the devotion of the people. After a lapse of eleven months, it was determined that, as no claim had been made on the part of the Congregation, the body of the servant of God should be considered to belong to the town, and it was eventually buried in the chapel of the Crucifix, close to the sepulchre of the priests.

We will now give a few examples of the prodigies wrought by the intercession of the servant of God. The first of these happened immediately after his burial. The sacristan, when he entered the church early in the morning to open it, noticed the presence of fresh flowers on the slab which covered the remains. The same thing happened on the following day, and although every precaution was used to find out, if possible, how they came there, the phenomenon was repeated. The doors were sealed, but, even so, the flowers made their appearance regularly, until at last further enquiry was abandoned as useless.

Among those who reaped the benefit of Brother James' prayers was a certain Petrucci, who for a month had suffered intense pain in his right hand, without being able to find a remedy. Happening to stand near the body when it was exposed in the church, the man, full of faith, touched it with his hand and was instantly delivered from all pain. The house which remained open during the funeral procession belonged to Rosa Cipollini who could not attend it with the rest, because her little son lay at the point of death. Hearing of the wonderful things which were being wrought through the intercession of

Brother James, she procurèd a rosary which had touched his feet, and having applied it to the body of the sick child, she had the satisfaction of seeing him suddenly cured: able to leave his bed and join the rest of the family at table.

A similar grace was obtained some months afterwards by Angela Piermartini of Cellere, who was cured instantaneously of a sharp pain in her head by the application of a rosary which had touched the body of Brother James. Sigismondo Olivieri, of the same town, was cured of acute spasms in his legs by placing thereon a piece of the Brother's habit. The Falandi family, with whom the Brother had been a guest, did not go unrecompensed; for Signora Cecilia, his hostess, was cured of many pains by using a piece of his mantle.

Several similar cases have been granted through the intercession of the servant of God down to our own days. It is related that Pietro Felicetti, of Cellere, after being kept in bed for six months with terrible pains, visited Brother James' tomb and promised to return thither on twenty successive days if he were cured. The next morning he awoke completely free from all pain. Sante Brinti, also of Cellere, was able to break an enormous abscess on her foot, unaided, after having applied to it a cloth which had touched the tomb of Brother James. In 1850 there lived at Cellere a certain Menicucci who from from the age of seven years had been subject to epilepsy which sometimes caused him to fall to the ground insensible twenty or thirty times a day. His mother visited the tomb of

Brother James, promising to have a Mass said in his honor if he would cure the unfortunate sufferer; and her vows were heard.

And here let us bring these notices to a close, happy to have been able to put before the devout reader shining examples of perfection in the lives of these thirteen companions of Saint Paul of the Cross. We have spoken of nothing but penance, solitude, self-abnegation and the hidden life;—opposed, all of them, to what the spirit of this world holds to be valuable and great. But this is precisely the spirit of Jesus Christ who *arguet mundum de peccato, et de justitia, et de judicio.* (Joan. XVI. 8): because, having seen the true form of justice and holiness in the Son of God made Man, they have not known and loved Him.

And now, may these rough memoirs help more than one Christian by attracting him to the love of the gospel, especially in this proud and thoughtless age, in which, unfortunately, the devil has succeeded in discrediting in the eyes of men the virtue which saves, and in honoring the spirit of the flesh which kills. We are confident that to-day, as before, the virtue of the Cross of Christ will bring salvation by preaching and example.

Quia in Dei sapientia non cognovit mundus per sapientiam Deum, placuit Deo per stultitiam praedicationis nostrae salvos facere credentes. (I Cor. 1. 21.)

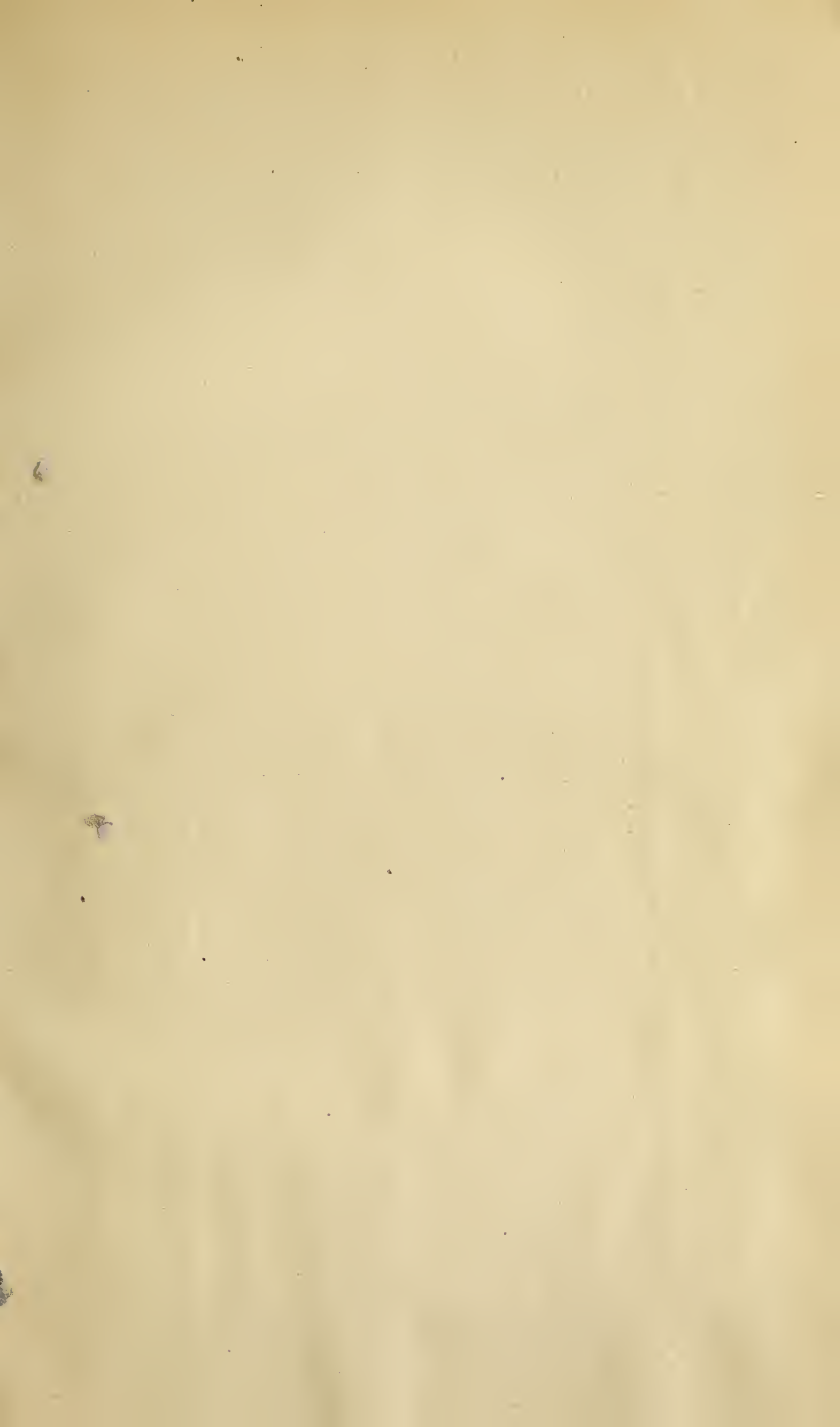
THE END.

PASSIONIST FATHERS
ST. PAUL, KANSAS

INDEX.

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	i
Fr. John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel	1
Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus.....	69
Fr. Marcus Aurelius of the B. Sacrament.....	113
Fr. John Thomas of St. Francis Xavier.....	149
Fr. Francis Anthony of the Crucified.....	173
Fr. Thomas of the Side of Jesus.....	207
Fr. Joseph of Our Lady's Dolors.....	271
Fr. Anthony of Calvary.....	296
Fr. Philip Hyacinth of the SS. Redeemer.....	310
Fr. Bernardine of Jesus.....	344
Fr. John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer.....	360
Brother Joseph of Holy Mary.....	397
Brother James of St. Louis.....	421





CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION
BX3880.Z7M451913 C001
MEMOIRS OF THE FIRST COMPANIONS OF SAINT



3 0311 00051 6976





3 0311 00051 6976